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Selling Sacrifice

The Lepers of Tracadie

The Beaver

CANADA'S HISTORY MAGAZINE

October | November 2009

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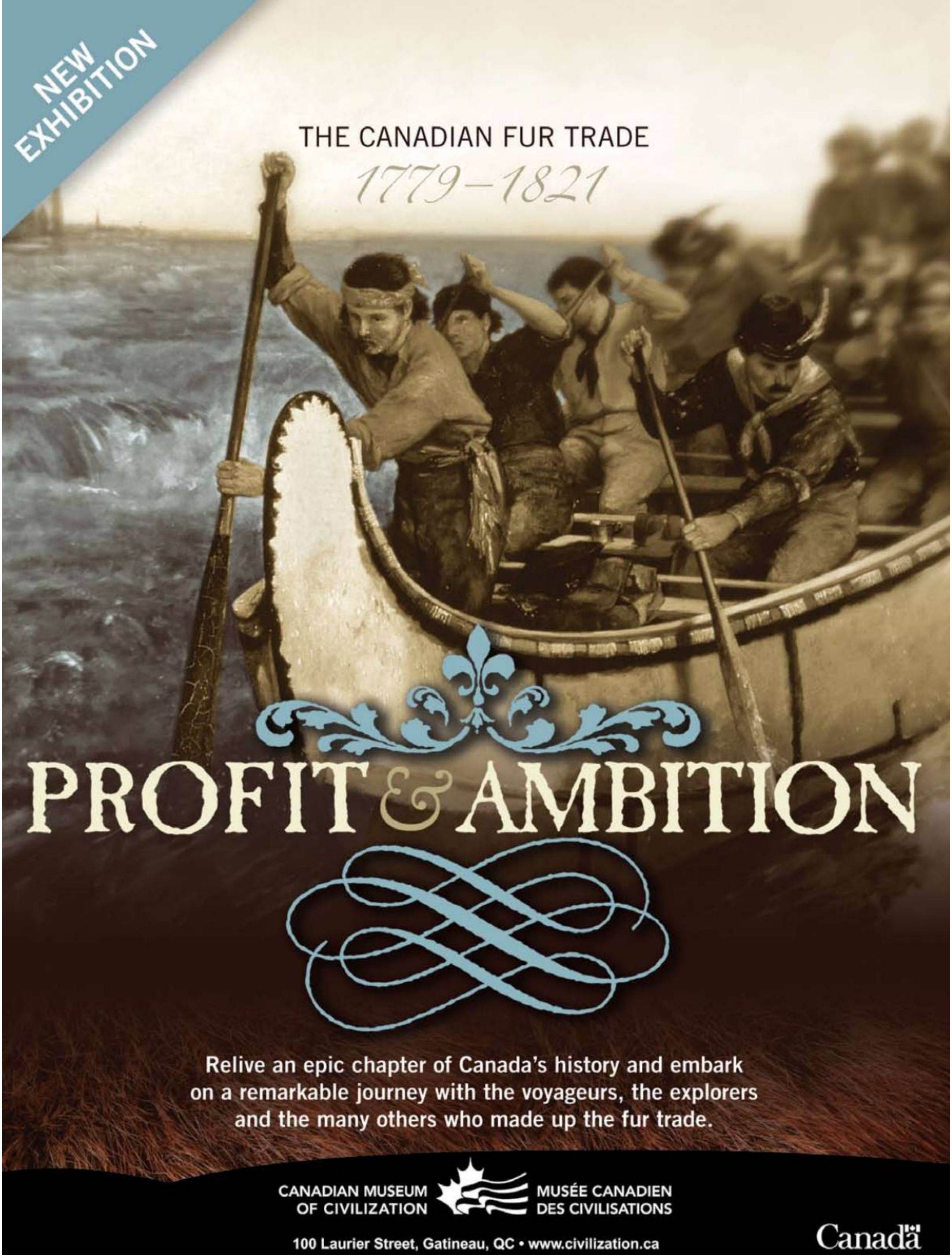

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Editor's note

Selling sacrifice

It was early May 2009, and I was on the phone with Michael Naxton, a British war medals curator.

At the time, the looming sale of Lieutenant Colonel Robert Shankland's Victoria Cross and eight other war medals was dominating headlines across the country. The auction had caught Canadians by surprise, myself included. Most surprising, to me, was the estimated price attached to the Shankland medal set — upwards of $300,000.

How, I asked Naxton, could the Victoria Cross command such a sum? After all, the medal — which was first presented in 1857 — had debuted to ridicule thanks to its plain-Jane design, with *The Times* of London deriding it as "poor looking and mean in the extreme."

MARIANNE HELM

"The Victoria Cross is a tangible relic of a man's bravery," Naxton replied. "And I can tell you, they generate more emotions, in my opinion, than any other collectible object."

There are no war heroes in my family — at least none that I know of. When I was younger, I toyed with the idea of joining the Armed Forces. My life took another path, and so I will never know what it's like to win a Victoria Cross, or any other valour medal for that matter. And since there are no war medals to be passed down in my family, I'll never have to face the temptation to sell them.

And what a temptation that must be. Imagine owning a Victoria Cross and knowing that it could easily command the equivalent of the price of a new house.

Several months ago, I began researching and interviewing sources for the article "Valour Sold," found in this issue. Heading into the story, I believed that the question of whether valour medals should be sold was pretty black and white: No, they shouldn't. However, as I learned more about the medals and spoke to the many stakeholders involved, the issue grew increasingly grey.

Some argue that the families of medal recipients should keep them in perpetuity. On an emotional level, I agree. But who am I too tell these families that they can't sell their medals, when doing so could wipe out their debts and set them up financially for a generation?

At the same time, I understand the anger felt by veterans who are offended by the notion of auctioning war medals.

How do you sell sacrifice?

As I wrote my story, I asked myself whether I would ever consider selling a valour medal earned by someone in my family. I want to believe that I wouldn't — but it's a choice I'll thankfully never have to make.

One thing is certain: Valour medals, especially the Victoria Cross, are more than just tangible relics of bravery; they're a crucial part of our military heritage, to be displayed and treasured.

If war medals must be sold, then Canadians — and the Canadian government, on our behalf — need to secure these medals. The cost of purchasing them is significant. But it's a small price compared to that paid by the Canadian soldiers, sailors, and airmen who earned them.

Mark Reid

Mark Reid, Editor
editors@historysociety.ca

The Beaver
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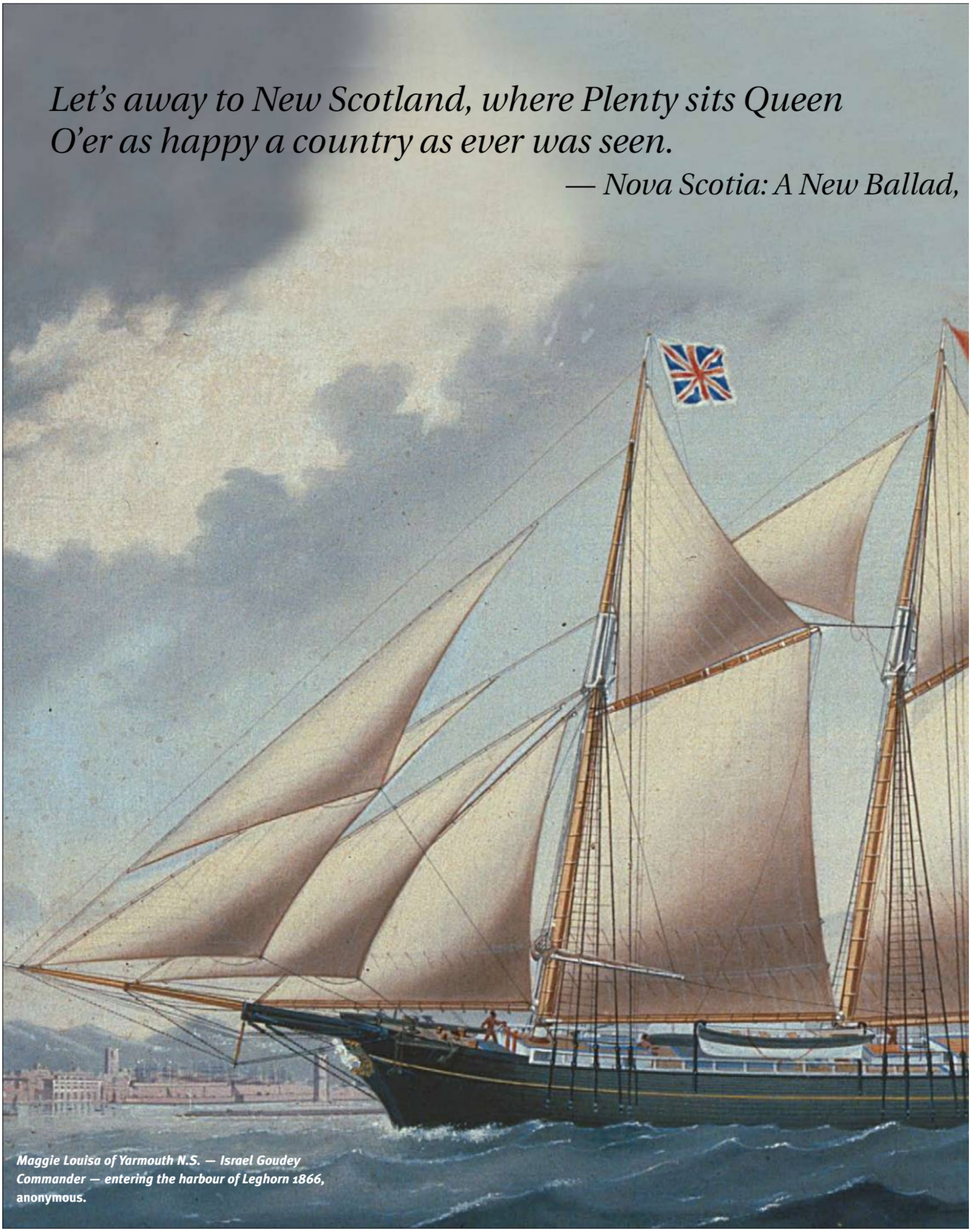
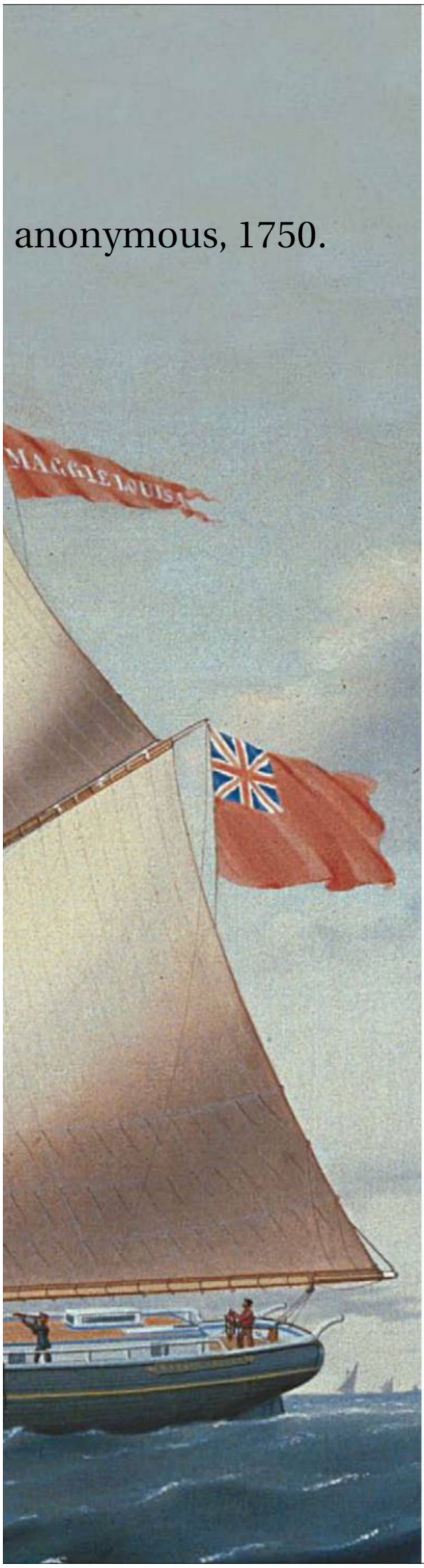
Let's away to New Scotland, where Plenty sits Queen
O'er as happy a country as ever was seen.

— Nova Scotia: A New Ballad,



Maggie Louisa of Yarmouth N.S. — Israel Goudey Commander — entering the harbour of Leghorn 1866, **anonymous.**

MCCORD MUSEUM/M982.71



anonymous, 1750.

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Letters

The Beaver
CANADA'S HISTORY MAGAZINE
DISASTER AT DIEPPE
DIEPPE: A COLOSSAL BLUNDER

Humble Dieppe vet

I was just reading my latest *Beaver* regarding the Dieppe fiasco ["Disaster at Dieppe," August/September 2009]. The father of a close friend of mine was captured at Dieppe when his tank was destroyed under him. He spent the rest of the war in a prisoner of war camp. His time there was difficult due to his name "Arthur Breithaupt." His hometown was Kitchener, Ontario.

I knew he had been in a POW because there was a needlepoint on his wall made in captivity using bits of salvaged thread. I am sure it still hangs in his wife's home in Kitchener. I was there for her eightieth birthday last summer but I failed to look for it. Now I really wish I had. We do not often get to touch evidence of our history with our bare hands.

I had no idea he had been at Dieppe until after his death when I saw him interviewed on a CBC documentary. He was humble about his role, as are most vets. It makes sense that I would not have known his history from casual conversations.

I am glad to see *The Beaver* review this important battle. The story has been told before but never better.

"Lest we forget" rings in the ear, but not as loud as it once did. Keep up the good work.

VICTOR LAURIN
AYR, ONTARIO

Notable mention

Your article on Dieppe was a good overview of the battle, but it didn't mention one of the most unique acts of bravery of the war.

Captain John Weir Foote was a chaplain with the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry. He went ashore with the regiment and attended to the wounded and dying during the battle. When the survivors were being evacuated, Foote boarded a landing craft, but looked back and saw all the men who were stranded and would be taken prisoner. He climbed out of the landing craft and waded to shore to be taken prisoner so that he could continue to act as chaplain to those most in need.

He was a POW until the end of the war. For this Foote was awarded the Victoria Cross.

ROBERT SWIFT
FOREST, ONTARIO

Lament for the soldiers

I have just received the recent copy of *The Beaver* with the article on Dieppe.

I am much too young to know anything about it. However, having read many books/articles, including yours, I am amazed that General Montgomery, who personally hated Lord Louis (as did "Bomber" Harris and Admiral Pound), was not later tried for war crimes.

Why do thousands of men get killed for jealousies and wounded egos? I have spoken to several dozen Canadian and British vets who have said unequivocally that Montgomery did not win the African war and Tobruk. Rather, many of his minions ignored him and "followed their gut instincts." Monty was furious but could do nothing, except in the end, get the glory.

The men were then banished and Prime Minister Winston Churchill did nothing to stop the exile.

This also relates to the dozen or more generals of the First World War who were equally inept and caused thousands and thousands of unnecessary deaths. Is it that because "we won the war?" It is something I have never clearly understood.

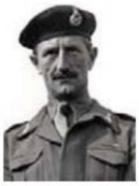
GORD YOUNG
EDITOR,
LAKEFIELD HERITAGE RESEARCH
PETERBOROUGH, ONTARIO

Our colossal blunder

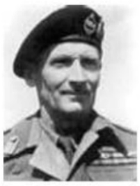
I read with great interest Dr. Granatstein's Dieppe article in the August/September 2009 issue.

Is not the photograph which accompanies the sidebar on General Bernard Montgomery that of Major General George Kitching of the 4th Canadian Armored Division?

ALFRED W. GARIEPY
PETERBOROUGH, ONTARIO



Kitching



Montgomery

[*Editor's note: Thanks to Mr. Gariepy and other readers who pointed out that the photo listed as General Bernard Montgomery, chosen by the* Beaver, *was indeed Major General George Kitching. The similarity is striking!*]

To the root of it

Dr. Fraser Dunford offers good advice in "Roots: For the record" [August/September 2009]. But "roots" must be rooted out. I have come across too many stated facts that upon closer examination are errors or not factually correct.

My paternal great-grandmother never existed, according to a genealogy that rests on local library shelves. I had her wedding documents from the church and procured her father's will from the registry office. It spelled out two daughters not mentioned in the published genealogy –– my great-grandfather was also named. The author had relied on the 1851 census, but the two daughters had married before 1851 and moved.

My mother never mentioned a step-great-grandmother, who was alive when I was young, as she had married my great-grandfather and there were ill feelings. These facts and others were discovered over time.

I truly am a doubting Thomas. Relying on two-hundred-year-old oral memories rather than archived documents is a slippery slope. Third-party confirmation is a must in genealogy, as history-memories only point you in a direction.

TOM KENNEDY
ST. CATHARINES, ONTARIO

History classes disappearing

I read *The Beaver* cover-to-cover and I often notice how history teachers are honoured.

I have taught history in Ontario's Durham District School Board for twenty-seven years and thought I should bring awareness of how the subject has been cut back in recent years, and in my school doesn't even exist as a separate subject starting in September.

I used to teach Grades 7 and 8 history on a schedule that lasted all year — about 120 minutes each week. When the government in Ontario began DPA (Daily Physical Activity) for twenty minutes a day, the time was skimmed off history and geography. The two subjects were 'semestered' –– still about 120 minutes a week, but for only half a year, which meant that the time was cut in half! The history award, which honours the best graduating history student, was eliminated this year. Next year, history and geography are to be taught as part of the English program, by the regular homeroom teacher.

The situation is completely disastrous for anyone who knows the importance of history in our world. I am retiring at the end of this next school year; however, I felt that your magazine readers should know how history is being choked out from the top down in Ontario.

PETER VOTH
AJAX, ONTARIO

Fond memories

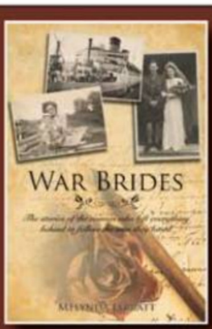
The article "Fields of Freedom" by Kaj Hasselriis in the August/September 2009 issue caused me to recall my boyhood in Lac La Biche, Alberta, where, during the late 1940s, my dad and I, every Victoria Day and Dominion Day, would attend baseball tournaments that included teams from Amber Valley.

I have fond memories of the Amber Valley baseball teams. The original settlers are indeed to be congratulated for their farming venture, and I am sad to remember that they faced racial prejudice, even in Alberta.

DONALD G.R. BLAIR
SASKATOON, SASKATCHEWAN

[Erratum: Ganonoque is in Ontario, not Quebec. Incorrect information was added to a letter in the August/September 2009 issue.]

***The Beaver* welcomes readers' comments.** E-mail us at editors@historysociety.ca or write to *The Beaver*, PO Box 56060, Portage Place RPO, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3B 0G9 Canada. Please include your address and daytime phone number. Letters may be edited for clarity or length.



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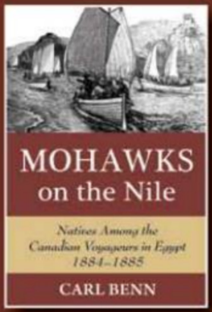

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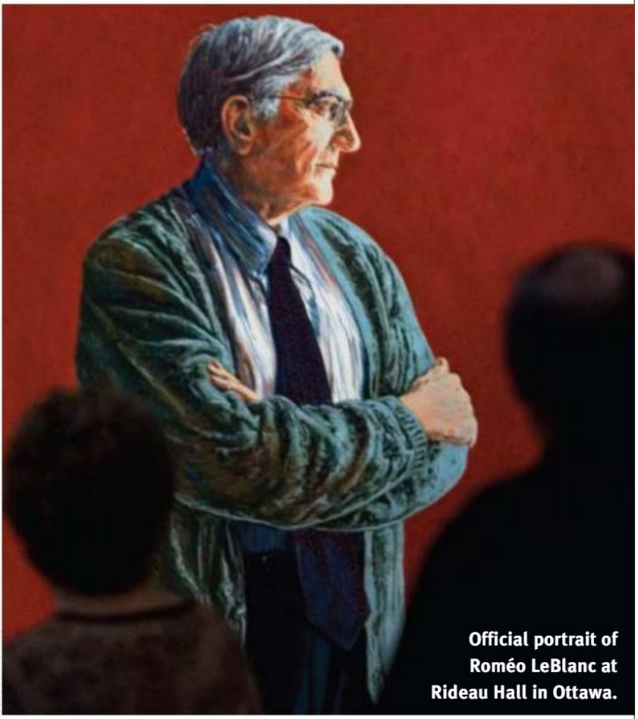
SHIPWRECKS!

DETAIL FROM BILKING THE TOLL, CORNELIUS KRIEGHOFF, M967.100.14 MCCORD MUSEUM

History loses a champion

Former Governor General Roméo LeBlanc mourned



Official portrait of Roméo LeBlanc at Rideau Hall in Ottawa.

CANADIAN PRESS

When Canada's top history teachers gather in Ottawa this November for the Governor General's Awards for Excellence in Teaching Canadian History, it will be a bittersweet affair.

That's because the man who made these awards possible — former Governor General Roméo LeBlanc — passed away last summer. If it hadn't been for LeBlanc, the award conceived by Canada's National History Society would not have carried the prestige it does today.

LeBlanc, who died June 24 at age eighty-one, was a teacher long before he became a journalist, federal cabinet minister and, later, Governor General.

While teaching high school in New Brunswick in the 1950s, he no doubt gained an appreciation for the need to recognize the work that educators do. LeBlanc had a particular interest in promoting the teaching of Canadian history, and this became evident during his tenure as Governor General from 1995 to 1999.

"At the heart of his speeches was the history of Canada and the people who had created its sense of itself," said historian and scholar Naomi Griffiths.

After his appointment as Governor General, the Winnipeg-based History Society approached LeBlanc's office to ask if the new award could be presented at his official residence at Rideau Hall in Ottawa.

Since the Governor General's office receives many requests of this nature, Laird Rankin, the society's executive director of the time, was not expecting an immediate response. Thus, he was surprised when the phone rang not long after — it was LeBlanc's aide asking if he was available for a meeting.

"All we had asked him for was to host the reception," recalls Rankin. "He [LeBlanc] took it one step further and said 'I would be happy to do that, and you can also name the award after me.'

"It was a wonderful gesture."

LeBlanc's initiative was significant in raising the profile of the award, which was established in 1996 and is given annually to six teachers across Canada.

"It's much more significant if you're getting an award from the Governor General of the country," said Joseph Martin, the society's president emeritus.

LeBlanc also served as a member of the society's advisory council, helping to shape the society's strategic planning.

Charlotte Gray, the chair of the History Society, remembers LeBlanc for being modest, kind, and keenly aware of his Acadian roots.

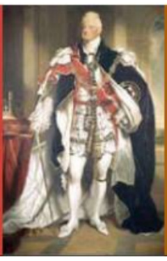
"Mr. LeBlanc pressed for recognition of Acadian history and people with quiet persistence, and embodied a respect for Canada's francophone traditions," Gray said.

He was known for his lack of pretension, something reflected even in his official image, notes Margaret Conrad, an expert in Atlantic Canadian history and a member of the History Society's board.

"His portrait at Rideau Hall captures him in a sweater, not a suit or uniform," Conrad said.

— Nelle Oosterom

TAKE THE DAY OFF



October 5

To mark the day in 1786 when Prince William Henry, captain of the frigate *Pegasus* and the future King William IV, became the first British royal to visit Nova Scotia. Salute the "Sailor King."

Currents

Our home & native …

The Bloody Caesar

When bartender Walter Chell was hired to create an exciting new cocktail for the 1969 opening of Marco's Italian restaurant at the Calgary Inn, he came up with a drink fit for the Roman Empire — the Bloody Caesar.

Chell knew that Marco's menu, filled with tomato and seafood sauces, demanded a special ingredient in the new drink. After a few months of experimenting, he decided to imitate the flavours of the dish Spaghetti Vongole (spaghetti with clams) and added the nectar of clams to tomato juice. From there he added vodka, then threw in a dash of Worcestershire sauce and some oregano.

In 1969, a clam-tomato juice did not yet exist. However, U.S.-based Duffy-Mott Company was just starting to develop its Clamato juice. Chell worked with Mott's to further development of the juice blend and even helped the company promote the new beverage.

Chell's official version of the cocktail — still served at what is now the Westin Calgary — begins by rimming the glass with lime and celery salt, includes salt, pepper, and Tabasco sauce, and is topped off with a stalk of celery. According to Mott's, the Caesar is today the most popular cocktail in Canada.

— Julijana Capone

ISTOCK

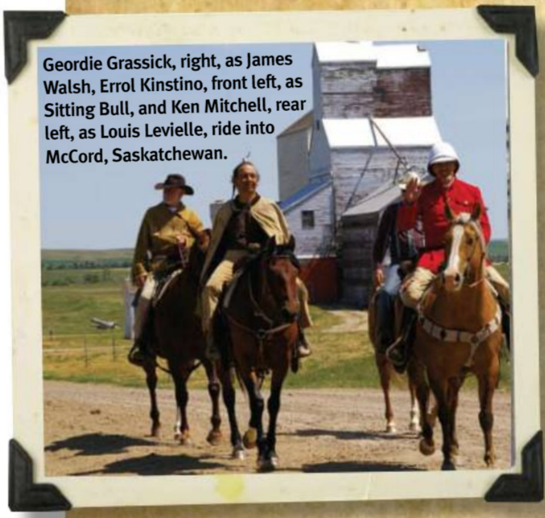
Living history

Spirits of history ha

The thing about history is that you can pass right by it and not know it.

That's the case with the North West Mounted Police Trail in southwestern Saskatchewan. It is not to be confused with the Red Coat Trail, a highway system that follows the symbolic, not actual, route of the then newly formed NWMP as its members marched west in 1874.

The NWMP Trail is the real deal. It runs about three hundred kilometres from Wood Mountain to Fort Walsh in the Cypress Hills. It played a pivotal role in Western Canadian history, but today the faint tracks of its heritage are hidden away in rolling rangelands and shaded coulees, mostly on private land.



Geordie Grassick, right, as James Walsh, Errol Kinstino, front left, as Sitting Bull, and Ken Mitchell, rear left, as Louis Levielle, ride into McCord, Saskatchewan.

GAIL PETERSON

Long used by the Métis and First Nations, the trail came to prominence when Sitting Bull, the great American warrior chief, and several thousand of his people arrived in Canada in 1876 as refugees. It was the job of NWMP Superintendent James Walsh to ensure Sitting Bull's people kept the peace and to convince them to return to the United States.

The trail between Fort Walsh and the Lakota Sioux encampments in the Wood Mountain area was well-trodden during four long years of protracted negotiations between Sitting Bull, Walsh, and American government representatives. In the end, the promise of rations finally prompted Sitting Bull's starving people to return to the U.S.

Fort Walsh is today a National Historic Site. Wood Mountain is a little town where a handful of the descendants of Sitting Bull's followers still live. That the trail between these places is remembered at all today is due to the efforts of a man who stumbled onto its rich history in the 1940s.

Everett Baker led a volunteer drive from 1959 to 1964 to survey the long-overgrown trail and set up tall white concrete markers at one-mile intervals.

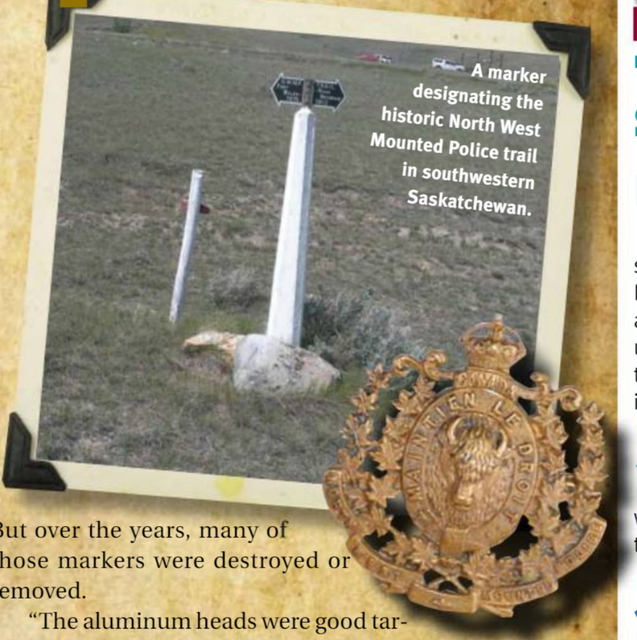
October 8

To honour the day in 1916 when Chilliwack, B.C., native James Richardson inspired his company by playing the bagpipes in battle, for which he received the Victoria Cross. Pipe up.

October 31

To note the day McGill University's innovative Redpath Library opened in 1893 in Montreal with glass floors for light diffusion. Read the fine print.

unt police Trail


A marker designating the historic North West Mounted Police trail in southwestern Saskatchewan.

MIKE FEDYK

But over the years, many of those markers were destroyed or removed.

"The aluminum heads were good targets for hunters," explains Finn Andersen, executive director of the Saskatchewan History & Folklore Society.

Fearing the trail would be forgotten, the society in 2002 formed a "Friends of the Trail" program to reinstate the markers. For $100, a donor could have a post refurbished in their name.

In addition, the Folklore Society joined with the Rural History and Culture Association of Saskatchewan plus six heritage and cultural organizations to hold a celebration called Spirits of the Trail this past summer. Highlights included historical re-enactments in towns near or along the trail.

"We did this to raise people's awareness of this trail," said Mike Fedyk, president of the culture association. "We felt it was important to recognize the trail and its significance to First Nations, Métis, and NWMP history."

To leave a lasting legacy of this effort to highlight the trail and its history, Fedyk is editing a book about the trail that will feature photographs taken by Everett Baker. The book is expected to be out by the end of the year.

— Nelle Oosterom

NAC/R9271-5-2-E

By the numbers

The St. George's Society of Toronto

The St. George's Society of Toronto was founded in 1834 to provide needy immigrants with food, medical care, lodging, and even a cemetery (a historic site the society still maintains). Today the society supports a wide range of charities. It funds medical research and food banks, helps children with autism and the elderly with Alzheimer's, and gives youth the chance to attend university and homeless single mothers a place to stay. Named after the patron saint of England, it continues its 175-year tradition of bringing people together for "good fun, good fellowship, and good works."

23 The date in April of St. George's Day, when the society was founded, as well as the minimum level in dollars for donations accepted by the society.

1891 The year the society built St. George's Hall on a vacant lot northwest of Toronto's Dundas and Yonge streets.

4,000 Dollars raised at an "Olde Englyshe Fayre" held in 1892 to furnish St. George's Hall and fund the Women's Committee's launch in 1893.

500 The number of poor the society had buried by 1930.

3,400 People who received Christmas food baskets packed by society members in 1934.

675 Food packages sent by the society to the London parishes hardest-hit by World War II bombings.

600,000 Dollars generated for charities at the 2009 Red Rose Ball, the society's largest annual fundraising and social event.

November 6

To celebrate the day in 1902 when Medicine Hat, Alberta, activated the first municipally owned natural gas system in Canada. Turn up the heat.

November 12

To observe the day in 1849 that the brig *Fanny* sailed from Charlottetown with forty Islanders bound for the California gold fields. Take your pick.

Currents

Awards celebrate equality victory

Shari Graydon receives the Governor General's Award in Commemoration of the Persons Case from Governor General Michaëlle Jean in October 2007.

SGT. ERIC JOLIN / REPRODUCED WITH PERMISSION OF THE OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY TO THE GOVERNOR GENERAL

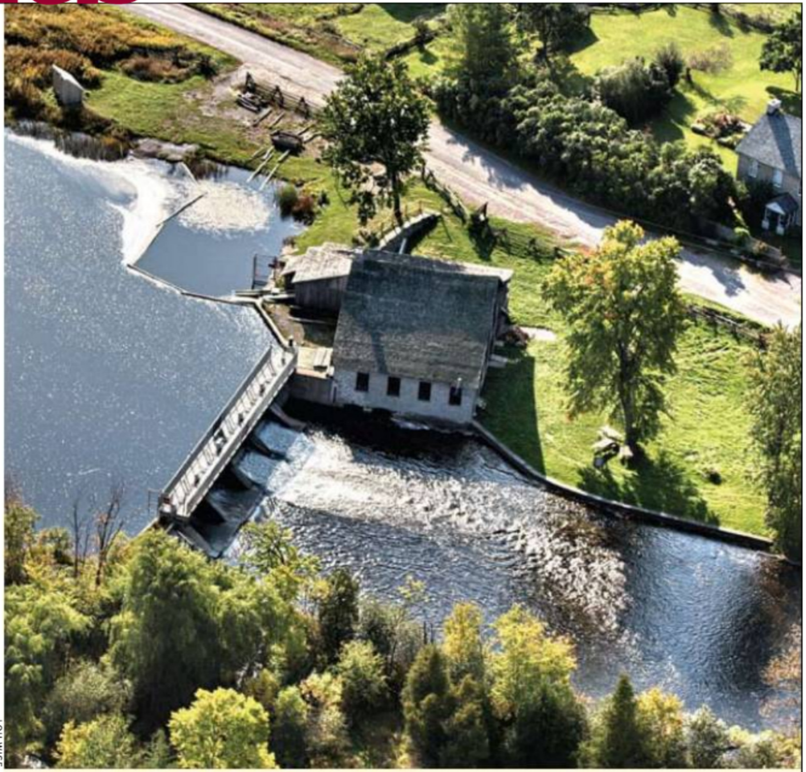
On October 18, 1929, after a lengthy legal battle, five feminists won the right for women to serve in the Canadian Senate. In what is now known as the Persons Case, the "Famous Five," comprised of Emily Murphy, Henrietta Muir Edwards, Nellie McClung, Louise McKinney, and Irene Parlby, went all the way to the Privy Council in Britain to obtain the landmark ruling that women are persons under law.

To mark the fiftieth anniversary of that decision, the government of Canada and then Governor General Edward Schreyer created the Governor General's Awards in Commemoration of the Persons Case. Five adult awards and one youth award have been presented annually since 1979 to honour "outstanding individuals who have helped to advance equality for girls and women in Canada, demonstrated by leadership and excellence in any field."

The Persons Case Awards remember the hard work of the five Alberta-based women and recognize that the struggle for Canadian women's equality continues. "It was not so very long ago that the Famous Five were victorious," Governor General Michaëlle Jean noted at the presentation of the 2008 awards. "In other words, our progress is recent and still so very fragile."

Each October since 1992 has been designated Women's History Month in Canada, and the anniversary of the legal victory is celebrated every October 18 on Persons Day.

— Beverley Tallon



LOU WISE

Restoring Hope Mill

A small group of volunteers has worked to bring a dilapidated Ontario mill back to life. Located in a park-like setting ten kilometres east of Peterborough, Hope Mill was used to card wool, make shingles, and, finally, to saw logs. It was powered by water from the Indian River until it ceased commercial operation in the early 1960s. The Otonabee Conservation Authority acquired the property, and from 1966 to the early 1990s it was used as a demonstration site and lumber resource — until government funding ran dry. With Hope Mill nearly derelict in 2000, about a dozen volunteers joined together with plans to restore the mill and machinery. Today, the saw blade can once again be heard ripping through logs and the refurbished machine shop features vintage machinery and hundreds of antique tools. Located only two kilometres upriver from Lang Pioneer Village, Hope Mill now receives more than five hundred visitors a year. It has also received four heritage preservation awards.

OTONABEE CONSERVATION

— B.T.

Christopher Moore

Land of the free museum

Is heritage too priceless to pay for? Washington thinks so.

Last year our family visited Washington, D.C. It's a great tourist city. Hotels at decent prices, lively neighbourhoods, and plenty of green spaces and broad boulevards. Everywhere there's the aura of the most powerful nation in the world.

After several fascinating days among the great American monuments and institutions, we drifted to the lighter side: We took a tour of the International Spy Museum. The ISM is a commercial enterprise, slick and cheeky and just instructional enough.

After the tour, I began to ponder the economics of all this culture. All week long, we had been sampling one of the great clusters of museums and galleries in the world: the Air and Space Museum, the National Gallery of Art, the Natural History Museum, the Museum of American History, the Museum of the American Indian.

The Arts and Industries Building at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C.

ISTOCK

The spy museum was the first one that charged an admission fee — for the four of us, $72. The others are all public museums. In Washington, D.C., the great public museums are free, and always have been.

I wondered: What if we had been dropping $18 to $20 per person at every museum and gallery we hit? We would have been spending literally hundreds of additional dollars a day. It would still have been worth it. But even for my family — second to none as museum fans — those prices might have changed our choices. Our experience would have been … thinner.

Recently I was reading about the museums and galleries in London. Think of them. The National Gallery. The National Portrait Gallery. The British Museum. The Victoria and Albert. The cost of visiting all these? Zero. Is Canada missing something the Brits and Yanks have grasped?

I've been fortunate to visit historic sites and museums across Canada. They are fit to stand with the best in the world. I don't begrudge a penny I have spent in Canada's museums. But it's not a penny they charge.

Museum of Civilization in Hull: $30 for a family the size of mine. The Canadian War Museum: also $30 for a family. The National Gallery: $18. It adds up.

Canadian historic sites charge in the same range. Fortress Louisbourg in Nova Scotia: $44.10 a family. Fort Henry, Ontario: $47. Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump, Alberta: $22. I've admired them all and paid up willingly.

I could go on. A family at the Royal British Columbia Museum in Victoria: $73.50. The Royal Ontario in Toronto: $74. The Glenbow in Calgary: $28.

This is not just about the dollars. We hear constantly that we Canadians do not know or appreciate our country and our history, that we would be better citizens, maybe even better people, if we did.

Mostly, we look to the schools to address that failing. Whenever a poll suggests that most Canadians would look blank if asked what month the October Crisis occurred, the response is always: They don't teach enough Canadian history in the schools.

But no matter how many history courses we impose, nothing encourages a historical sense in young people better than the awareness that it's a grown-up concern. Nowhere, I'd say, is rich, adult, cultural engagement with history better served than in our museums, galleries, and historic places.

Spend a few days observing people in Ottawa's national museums, and you will realize you are among people with a sense of what this country is. That's why the Brits and the Americans are onto something with their free-museums policies. They are saying to themselves and their visitors: This is the best of us, and this is too important to be reserved for those who will drop $75 to get the family in.

Now, I can see the drawbacks. Museums are already penny-pinched. We would need a real transformation among the funding agencies as to why cultural institutions are worth funding properly. Otherwise, taking away their admission revenues, leaving them even more dependent, would be a disaster. But free museums seem to be working for London and Washington. Is anybody in Ottawa thinking like this?

Christopher Moore comments in every issue of *The Beaver*.

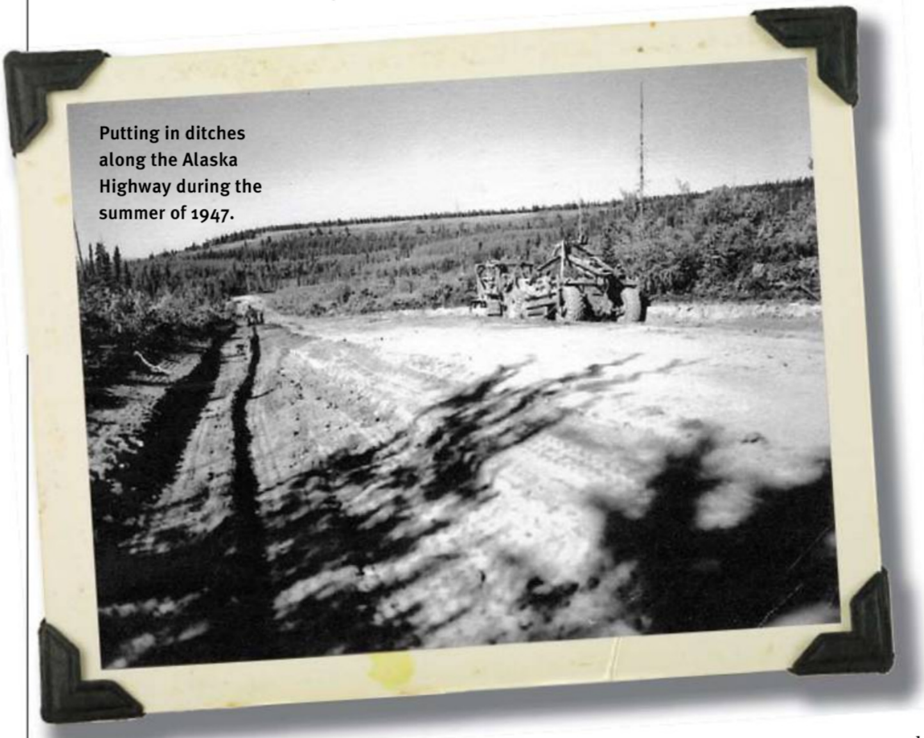
Your Story

The road warriors

The building of the Alaska Highway was a monumental undertaking, recalls Hope Morritt.

A few years ago, I spoke with a man in a coffee shop in Fort St. John, British Columbia.

The man was recalling the time when thousands of American G.I.s landed in this northeastern B.C. community to build the Alaska Highway. The man, who had been fourteen years old at the time — March 1942 — told me a story of a funny encounter with an American officer he had met on a busy sidewalk:



Putting in ditches along the Alaska Highway during the summer of 1947.

DAN CAMERON

"'Sir,' I said, 'you're gonna have to be careful of the muskeg in this country.'

"'Well son, don't worry,' he replied. 'We have sharpshooters who'll take care of him.'"

The anecdote made me smile, because I too had lived through those busy, turbulent times.

In March 1942 I was working as a reporter with the *Edmonton Journal* when that city was also flooded with American soldiers,who were under orders to complete the Alaska Highway as quickly as possible. It was just three months after the December 7, 1941, surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, and Japan's air force was just a few months away from occupying two of Alaska's Aleutian Islands. Canada and the U.S., both nervous about an invasion via Alaska, agreed to build a road to link Alaska with the lower American states.

Edmonton was the base camp for the highway, and the influx of soldiers was an economic godsend for the region, which was booming in anticipation of work on a 1,520-mile (2,446-kilometre) road from Dawson Creek, B.C., to Fairbanks, Alaska. (The highway officially ends at Delta Junction, ninety-eight miles, or 158 kilometres, before Fairbanks, but the latter is popularly considered its end.)

At the time, some Canadians were wary of having so many American soldiers in the region. I still remember the mayor of Edmonton, in a radio interview, annoying many patriotic Canadians when he said: "Yessir! This is the forty-ninth state."

The challenges that lay before the construction teams were immense: vast and remote mountain ranges, swamps, and muskeg, and mile after mile of unforgiving rock.

Yet they persevered. On November 20, 1942, at Soldiers Summit, 150 miles (241 kilometres) north of Whitehorse, a ribbon-cutting ceremony was held to open the gravel road. It had taken just eight months to complete the highway. At least 11,000 soldiers and 16,000 American and Canadian civilians had worked on the $147.8-million project.

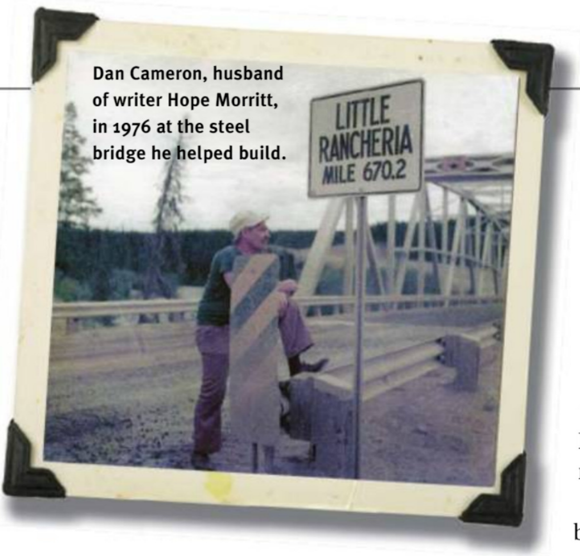
The opening of the road, however, was just the beginning. Maintaining the highway turned out to be never-ending.

In October 1949, for instance, I stood on the high bank above the north tower of the 650-metre Peace River suspension bridge. Built in four months in 1942, this bridge was the pride of the American army, but the swirling current of the Peace had put a strain on the north anchor block.

At this dizzying height, I watched as Dan Cameron, a Canadian engineer, supervised the lowering of buckets of wet cement by crane to a crew who dumped it into a cofferdam below. They also placed 3,600 tonnes of 4.5-tonne boulders in the river upstream to prevent the backward coiling of the current.

Yet, in spite of all of their efforts, the bridge collapsed in 1957.

Just how difficult a challenge did bridge-building pose? Well, in just one day during the spring melt of 1943 ice jams reduced forty wooden bridges to matchsticks.



Dan Cameron, husband of writer Hope Morritt, in 1976 at the steel bridge he helped build.

HOPE MORRITT

Permafrost also posed a major problem. Cameron recalled warning the Americans during construction that "you make a slight cut in permafrost with a hand shovel, and the ground weeps for days." In other words, disturbing the plants and rotten organic matter robbed the permafrost of its insulating cover, resulting in a quick thaw that created a lake where the road should have been.

Eventually, engineers realized that the key to defeating the permafrost was to provide insulation. Engineers put down corduroy (log) roads, and covered them with 1.5-metre layers of sand or rock fill.

Then there was the muskeg! In the summer of 1949, Cameron and I were looking for wildflowers around Watson Lake, Yukon, when we stumbled into muskeg. Imagine our surprise when we discovered a U.S. Caterpillar tractor mired in the bog like a sinking ship.

In 1946, the U.S. transferred control of the Canadian portion of the highway to Canada. In 1964, jurisdiction passed from the Canadian Department of Defence to the federal Department of Public Works.

To this day, I believe that the building of the Alaska Highway — in just eight months — should be included on the list of modern Wonders of the World.

Hope Morritt worked as a reporter and editor for the *Edmonton Journal*, the *Edmonton Bulletin*, the *Sarnia Observer*, and the *London Free Press*. She is also the author of three novels, two history books, a memoir, and a book of war poetry.

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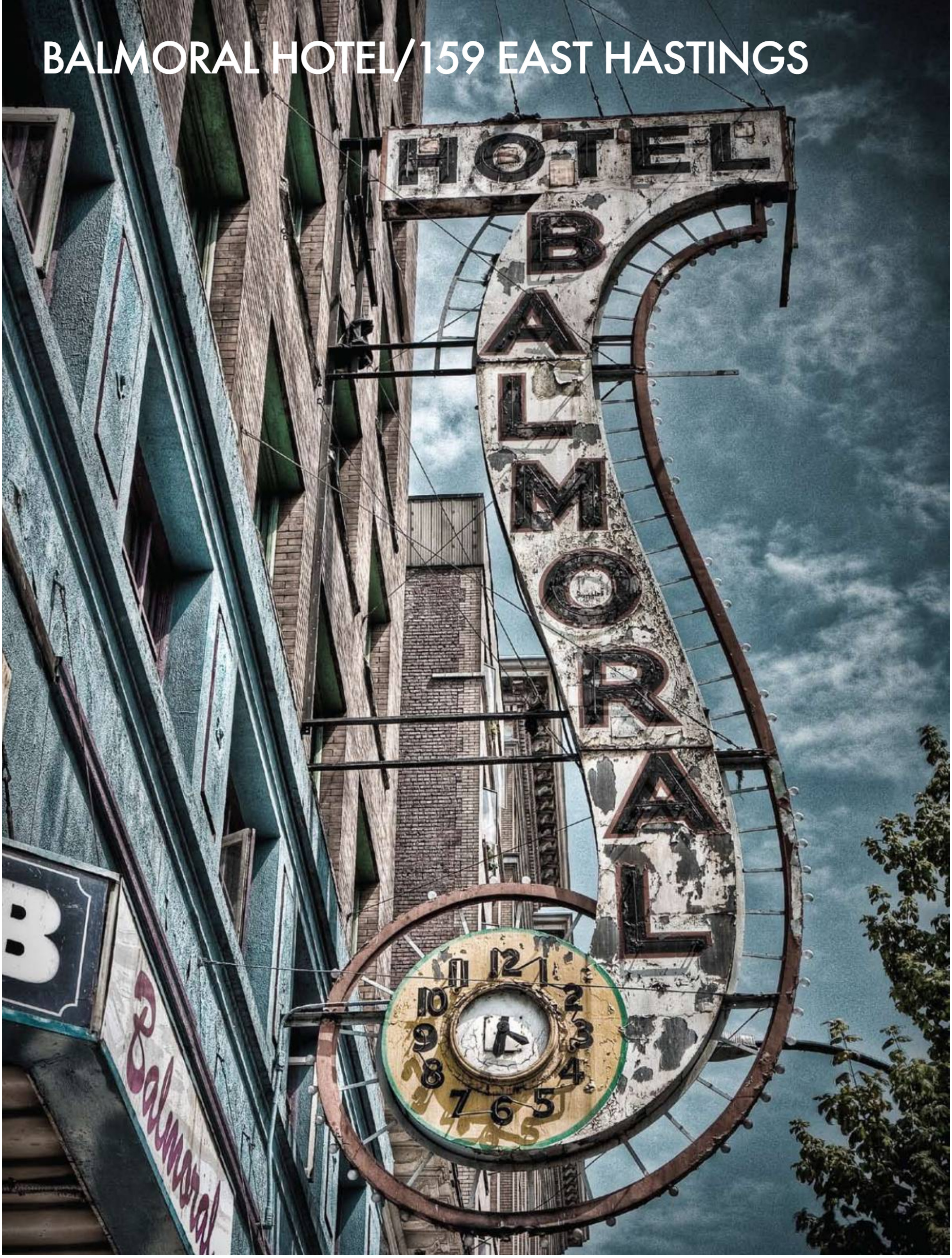
SAVING SKID ROW

The old buildings of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside have a checkered past. Is their shady heritage worth saving?

by Christopher Pollon, photos by Venturi + Karpa

Vancouver activist and former city councillor Jim Green sees value in the city's heritage hotels.

BALMORAL HOTEL/159 EAST HASTINGS

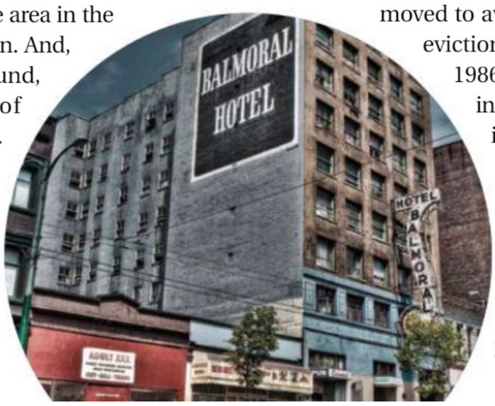

HOTEL
BALMORAL
B
Balmoral

Just before 6 a.m. on March 20, 1933, an explosion rocked Vancouver's East Hastings Street, blasting a small crater in the entrance to Alexander Pantages' theatre. The blast also shattered every window of the nine-storey Balmoral Hotel across the street. Miraculously, no one was killed. Police blamed it on labour unrest — the theatre had just hosted a meeting of the Workers Unity League to celebrate the anniversary of the Paris Commune.

The theatre building, opened in 1908 by the famous vaudeville entrepreneur, survived the explosion, the Great Depression, two wars, and a century-long decline of the surrounding neighbourhood. But it may not survive the latest threat — gentrification.

Pantages is like many other familiar landmarks of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside — in danger of being swept away by a tide of renewal targeting the city's last swath of "undeveloped" downtown.

The area around East Hastings and Main was once a bustling centre of commerce and retail. But after a worldwide economic slump in 1913, it increasingly became home to unemployed and transient blue-collar workers. With the onset of the Depression, the neighbourhood's low-rent hotels became habitats for the unemployed and dissenting elements of society; by the 1940s such hotels as the Patricia, Regent, Balmoral, and New Fountain supported slack-timing longshoremen, sailors, seasonal loggers, and fishermen. The ground floor bars attached to such establishments developed a rough reputation as refuges for "dope fiends," "sex perverts," and the general criminal detritus of society.



Today, the neighbourhood — infamous as the poorest postal code in Canada — is once again in transition. Retailers who abandoned the area in the 1990s appear poised to return. And, pending an economic rebound, increased development of the area seems inevitable.

Fighting against this current of gentrification are a small number of operating hotel bars, which persist as relics of the early twentieth century. They remain open for business and are surprisingly intact.

No one alive in Vancouver today is more aware of their value than Jim Green, a former Vancouver city councillor and community activist.

"These buildings reflect a different time, when the economy was solely based on resource extraction and Canada was a maritime power," says Green. "The reason these places existed was for the young men who would come out of the woods or off the docks or ships, often with money to spend, to live in these single-room hotels and drink [downstairs] in the bars."

Green himself is part of that heritage. Born in Alabama, he came to Vancouver to avoid the draft during the Vietnam War. He was introduced to the downtown when he worked as a longshoreman in the 1970s. He was for a time a resident of the Patricia Hotel.

For nearly forty years, Green has battled greedy slumlords, local governments, and developers bent on gentrifying the downtown. In the lead-up to the 1986 world's fair in Vancouver, Green earned the title "Khadafi of the Downtown Eastside" for his uncompromising approach. Expo 86 was a disaster for low-income residents, many of whom were evicted to make way for higher-priced tourist hotels.

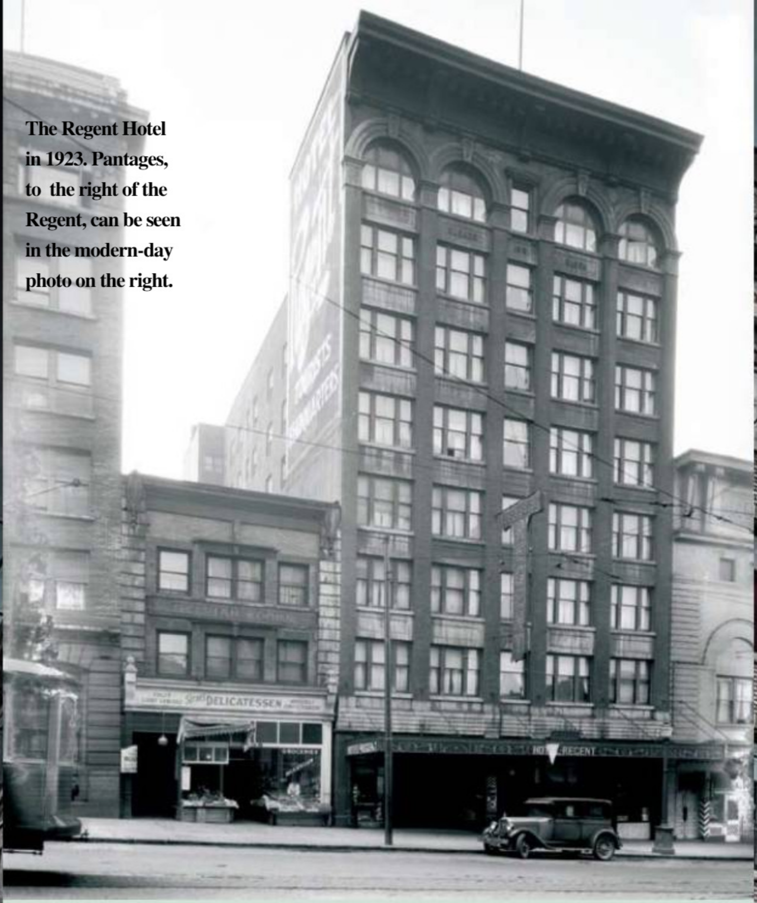
Green was sued and threatened by landlords opposed to his advocacy work, which culminated in his creation of what is known as the SRA (single-room accommodation) bylaw. Passed in 2003, it was created to protect hotel residents from eviction without cause.

The organizers of the 2010 Winter Olympics have moved to avoid bad publicity by ensuring that evictions similar to those that occurred in 1986 do not happen. But there is still intense pressure to sweep away the old in favour of new development.

Are the old hotels and associated buildings worth keeping?

Consider that each has a tale to tell about Vancouver's past. Here are some of their stories:

REGENT HOTEL-



The Regent Hotel in 1923. Pantages, to the right of the Regent, can be seen in the modern-day photo on the right.

CITY OF VANCOUVER ARCHIVES

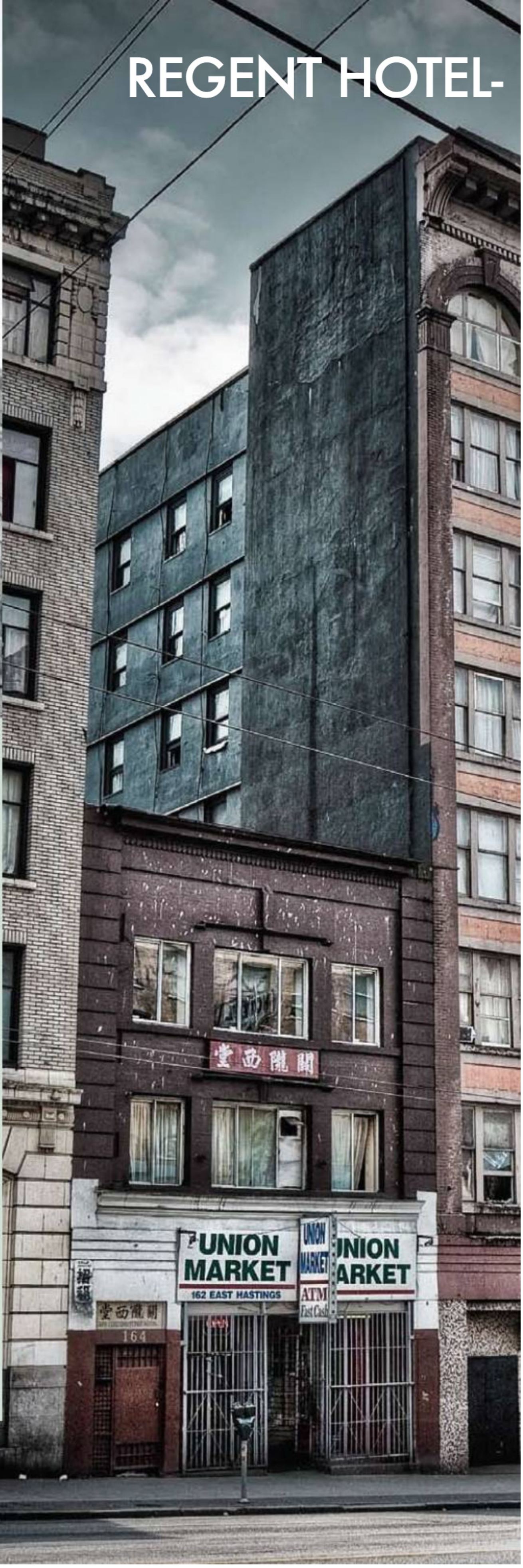
Long before his Vancouver theatre was conceived, built, or bombed, its original owner, Alexander Pantages, was one of nearly 40,000 prospectors who swarmed into British Columbia and Alaska in the wake of the Klondike gold rush. According to legend, Pantages left his home in Greece at age nine, eventually jumping ship in San Francisco; the gold rush took him to Dawson City, where he managed his first theatre on Canadian soil.

Pantages went on to build a vaudeville empire that captivated North America. His theatre at Hastings and Main, the second in the Pantages chain, opened in 1908 with the Vancouver debut of *Wallace the Untameable Lion*.

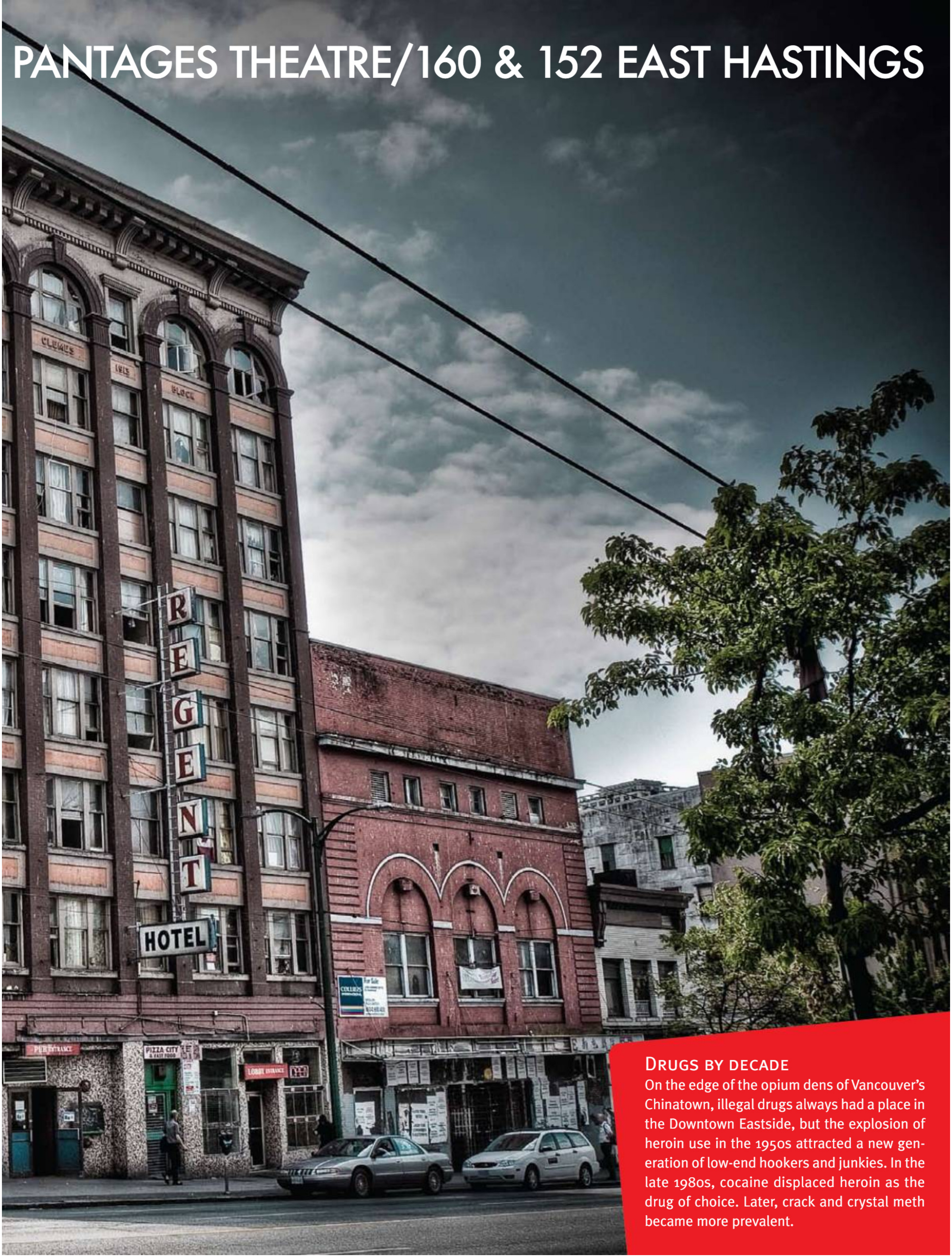
The theatre was built by Pantages' silent partner, English-born B.C. real estate baron Archie Clemes, who also built the upscale Regent Hotel next door in 1913. Together, the two buildings were part of what became the Clemes Block.

But just ten years after its debut performance, the theatre became passé due to a "declining neighbourhood situation" and inadequate seating. Pantages abandoned the venue, which went through several owners and, aside from the 1933 bombing, survived a fire in the projection booth and a huge scandal in 1953, which saw the entire cast and crew of a live production of *Tobacco Road* charged and convicted of staging an "immoral performance."

The theatre has sat unused since 1994. As recently as last year, there were plans to restore Pantages to its original purpose as a live theatre venue. But those plans were scrapped after the owner was unable to reach an agreement with the city of Vancouver. As of the summer of 2009, the site was up for sale and the seller was seeking a demolition permit for the building.

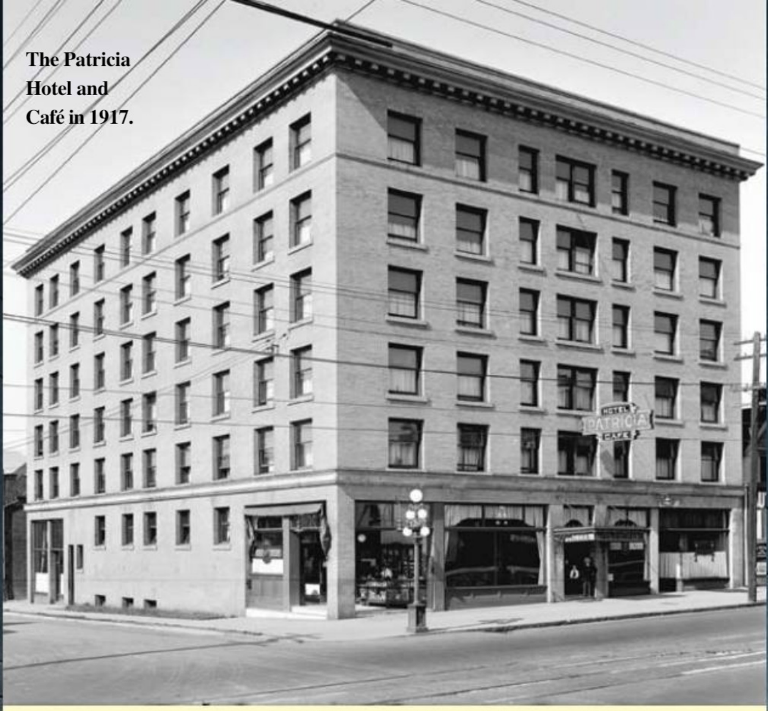


PANTAGES THEATRE/160 & 152 EAST HASTINGS



DRUGS BY DECADE

On the edge of the opium dens of Vancouver's Chinatown, illegal drugs always had a place in the Downtown Eastside, but the explosion of heroin use in the 1950s attracted a new generation of low-end hookers and junkies. In the late 1980s, cocaine displaced heroin as the drug of choice. Later, crack and crystal meth became more prevalent.



The Patricia Hotel and Café in 1917.

CITY OF VANCOUVER ARCHIVES

A referendum in 1920 ended Prohibition in B.C. at around the exact time Ferdinand "Jelly Roll" Morton, one of early jazz's most influential pianists and composers, rolled into town for an extended gig at the Patricia Café at 403 East Hastings. The café was part of the larger Patricia Hotel that still operates there today.

Singer Ada "Bricktop" Smith performed at the Patricia during the same period. She remembered facing a tough crowd of Swedish lumberjacks.

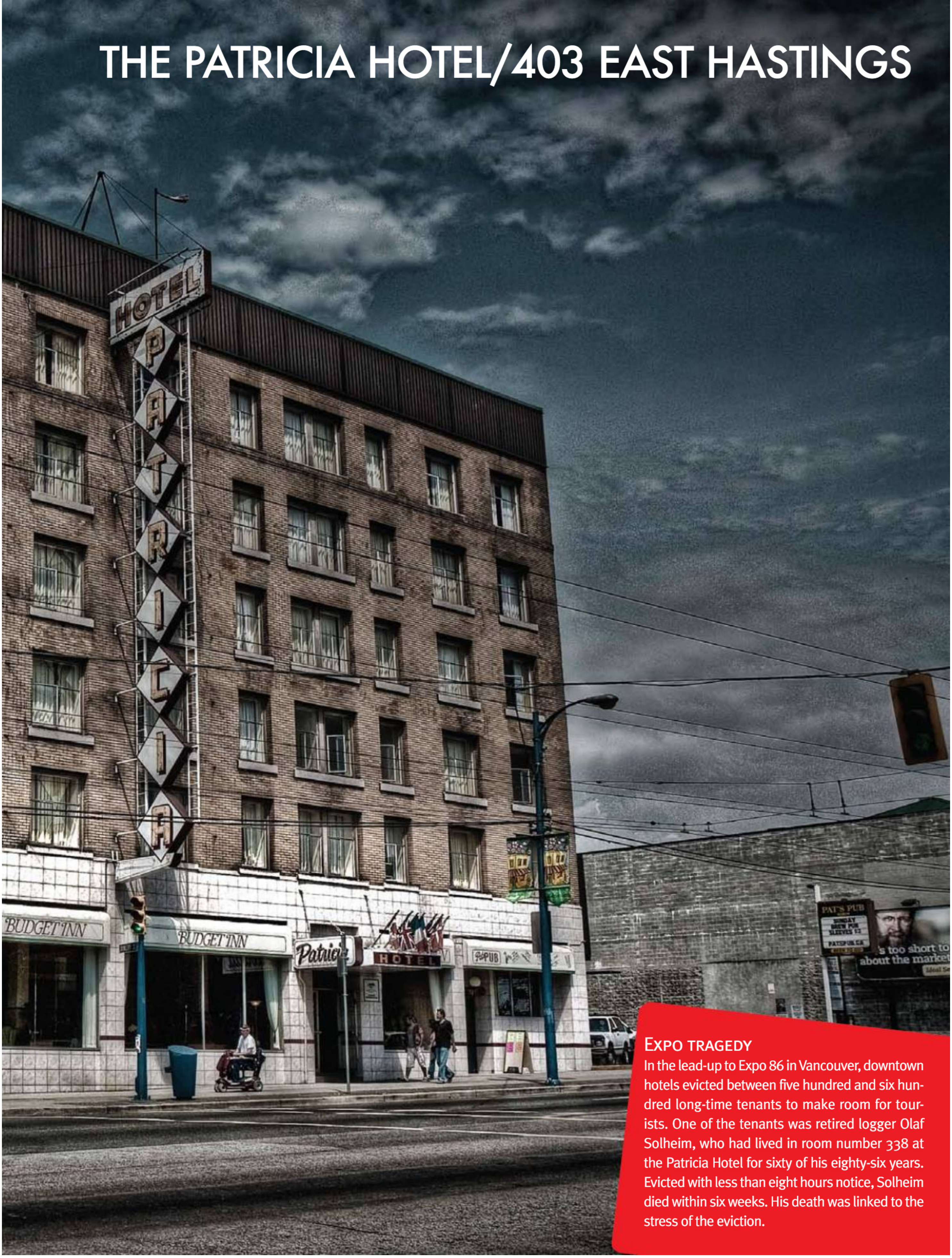
"Tall strapping fellows, they could make a bottle of whiskey disappear in no time," wrote Bricktop of the customers at the Patricia Café in her autobiography. "Pretty soon they'd be drunk and ready to fight."

Bricktop broke her leg during one such brawl on Christmas Eve of 1919.

In *Guilty of Everything*, Vancouver writer John Armstrong describes the long-standing customers of the Patricia and other hotels: "The working men came into town horny and rich, stayed until the money ran out, then made their way back to the woods or the ocean. A few months later they came back and did it again until one day they were too old to go back to work or were just too busted-up and crippled. Then they moved in permanently and learned how to make a glass of draft beer last four or five hours."

BUDGET INN
BUDGET INN

THE PATRICIA HOTEL/403 EAST HASTINGS


HOTEL
PATRICIA
BUDGET INN
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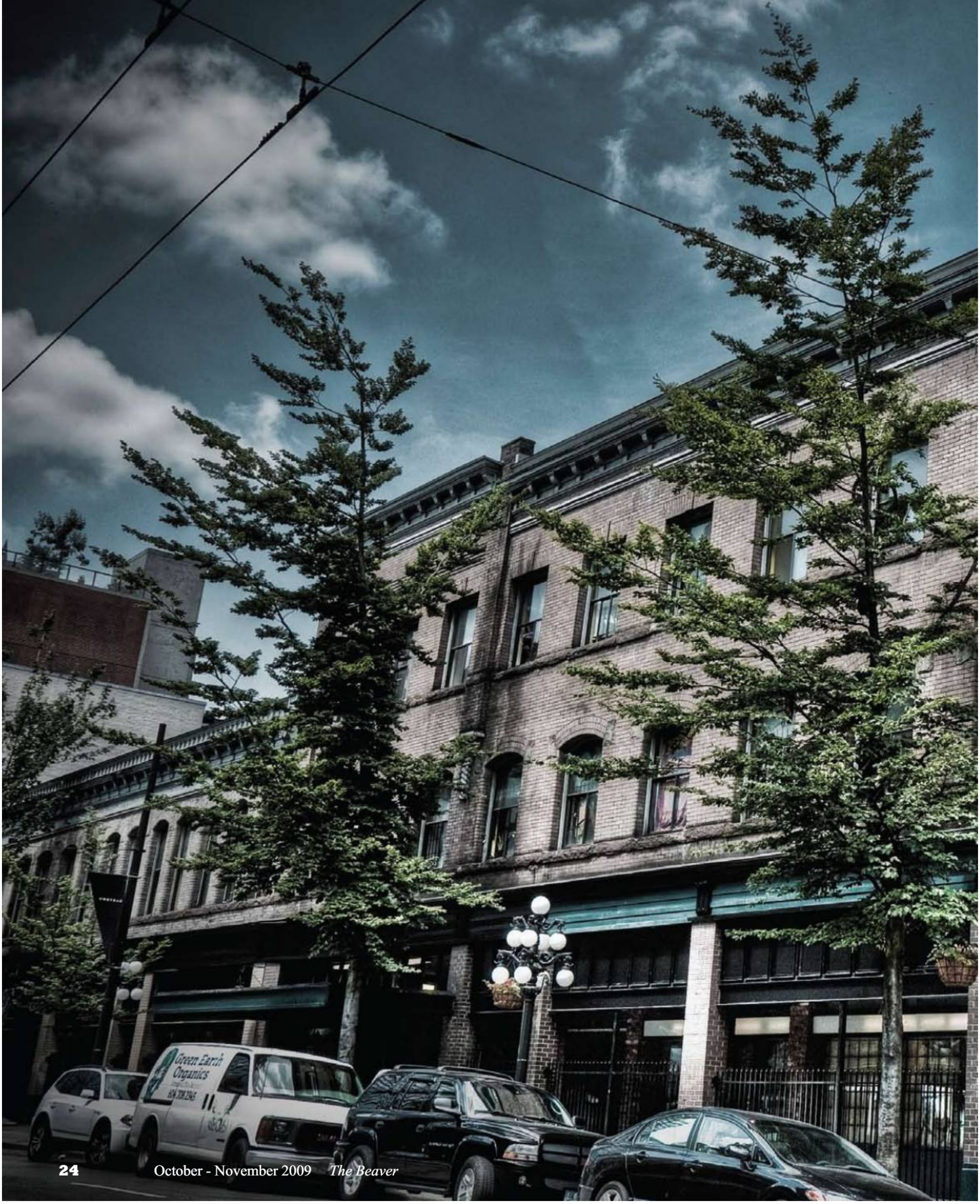
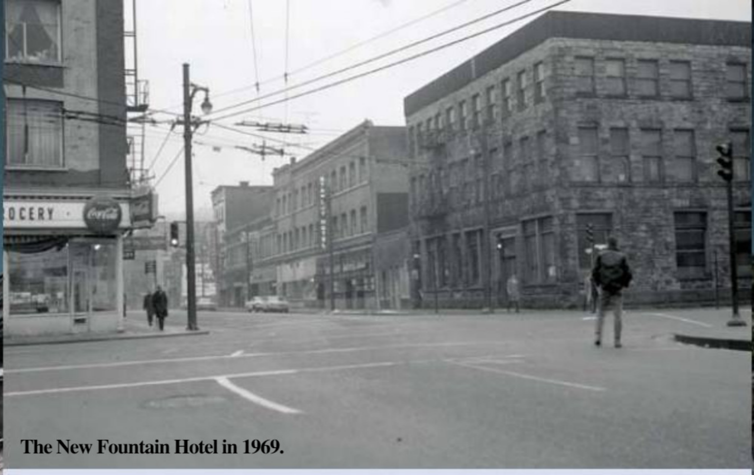
PUB
PAT'S PUB
's too short to
about the market

Expo Tragedy

In the lead-up to Expo 86 in Vancouver, downtown hotels evicted between five hundred and six hundred long-time tenants to make room for tourists. One of the tenants was retired logger Olaf Solheim, who had lived in room number 338 at the Patricia Hotel for sixty of his eighty-six years. Evicted with less than eight hours notice, Solheim died within six weeks. His death was linked to the stress of the eviction.

THE NEW FOUNTAIN/21–53 WEST CORDOVA


Green Earth Organics



The New Fountain Hotel in 1969.

CITY OF VANCOUVER ARCHIVES

Built in 1899, the New Fountain was originally part of the investment portfolio of Evans, Coleman and Evans, a business partnership that made a vast fortune in B.C. salmon canning, herring, forestry, and coal.

By the 1950s, it was among the area's worst dives. In 1953, plainclothes health officers entered the New Fountain Hotel to observe a "male VD patient" jumping between the male and female sides of the New Fountain and neighbouring Stanley Hotel:

"During a ten-day drinking and sexual spree … he picked up six women in these parlours, always walking directly into the woman's entrance," wrote Robert A. Campbell in *Sit Down and Drink Your Beer*.

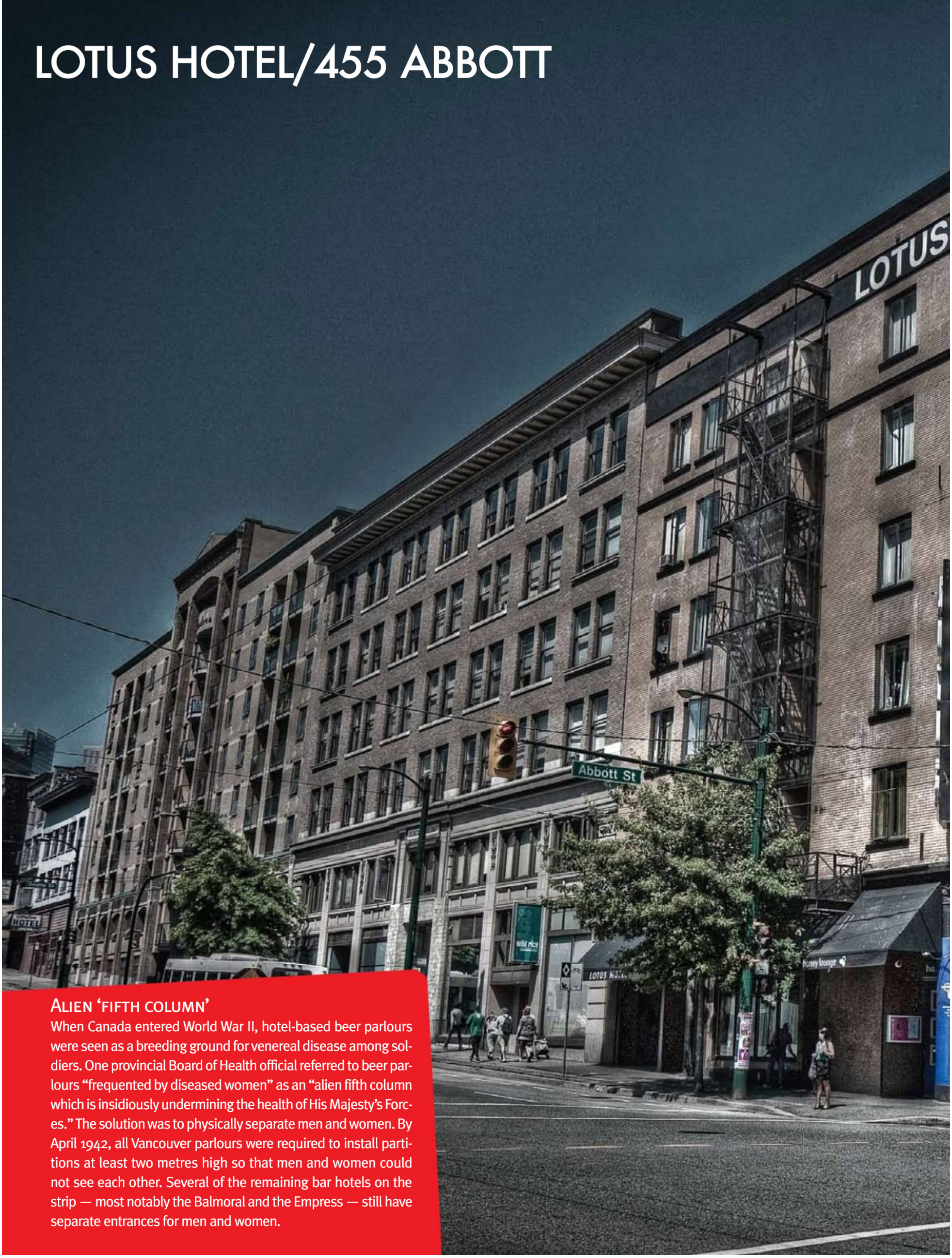
Already a tough working-class bar by the early 1960s, the New Fountain found a new and steady clientele in the city's gay community, including a growing subculture of cross-dressers who migrated west beginning in 1967 following a crackdown on vice by Montreal police.

In 1968, *Vancouver Province* reporter John Griffiths observed the following: "The 'drag queens,' a popular name of the female impersonators, appear in their wigs, miniskirts, black net stockings and high heels … often given away only by their muscular legs … adding dramatically to the scene of revulsion."

In 1968, the city refused to renew the lease for the New Fountain and the Stanley Hotel next door. It was reopened in the early 1970s as Vancouver's first privately developed rent-controlled social housing development. Today, the Stanley-New Fountain Hotel is a city-owned shelter.

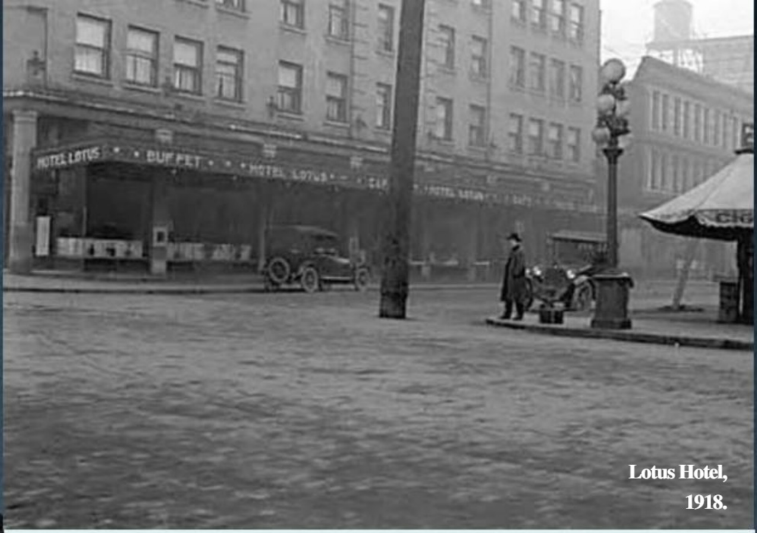
CLUB 23 GUEST CLUB
EST

LOTUS HOTEL/455 ABBOTT



Alien 'fifth column'

When Canada entered World War II, hotel-based beer parlours were seen as a breeding ground for venereal disease among soldiers. One provincial Board of Health official referred to beer parlours "frequented by diseased women" as an "alien fifth column which is insidiously undermining the health of His Majesty's Forces." The solution was to physically separate men and women. By April 1942, all Vancouver parlours were required to install partitions at least two metres high so that men and women could not see each other. Several of the remaining bar hotels on the strip — most notably the Balmoral and the Empress — still have separate entrances for men and women.


Lotus Hotel, 1918.

CITY OF VANCOUVER ARCHIVES

A two-page *Vancouver Sun* advertisement in January 1913 heralded the Lotus as "a marvel of modern equipment, elegance and luxury" that was "absolutely fireproof, sound-proof and vermin-proof." It had an eighteen-metre-long mahogany bar, hammered bronze chandeliers, and multiple stained glass panels.

By the late 1940s, it was still making headlines — but for different reasons. It was now the scene of shootings, illegal liquor sales, and bookmaking. Of all the beer parlours hotels in Vancouver, the Lotus attracted the most heat for illegal gambling. But police presence at the Lotus diminished dramatically in October of 1956, when Vancouver Police Chief Walter Mulligan resigned amid accusations of taking bribes from bookmakers.

***

The hotel bars of the Downtown Eastside today attract more international tourists, artists, and college-aged partiers than at any time in the last century.

"The hipsters have discovered the Downtown Eastside," says David Eby, a lawyer and the executive director of the B.C. Civil Liberties Association. "The Lotus today is still a hotel, but the ground floor has transformed into a really popular dance club."

Last year, the pub in the Patricia Hotel — which includes the original dance floor that dates from before the time of Jelly Roll Morton himself — was born again as a venue for rock and punk bands, as have other gritty Hastings Street hotel bars like the Balmoral and Astoria.

Even the Regent Hotel, which today contains one of the roughest bars left on the strip, is attracting young adventure tourists and locals who enjoy drinking ultra-cheap draft beer shoulder to shoulder with grizzled resource industry veterans, sex trade workers, and addled ubstance abusers.

The reason a new generation is being attracted to the hotel bars today, says Jim Green, is that such venues possess an authenticity that cannot be found in any other Vancouver neighbourhood, let alone be replaced by new glass-and-steel towers.

"Nobody on earth would build these kind of buildings now, and even some of the big hotel neon signs are still there and fabulous," says Green. "Building all of that now would just be too expensive."

Christopher Pollon is a Vancouver-based freelance journalist.

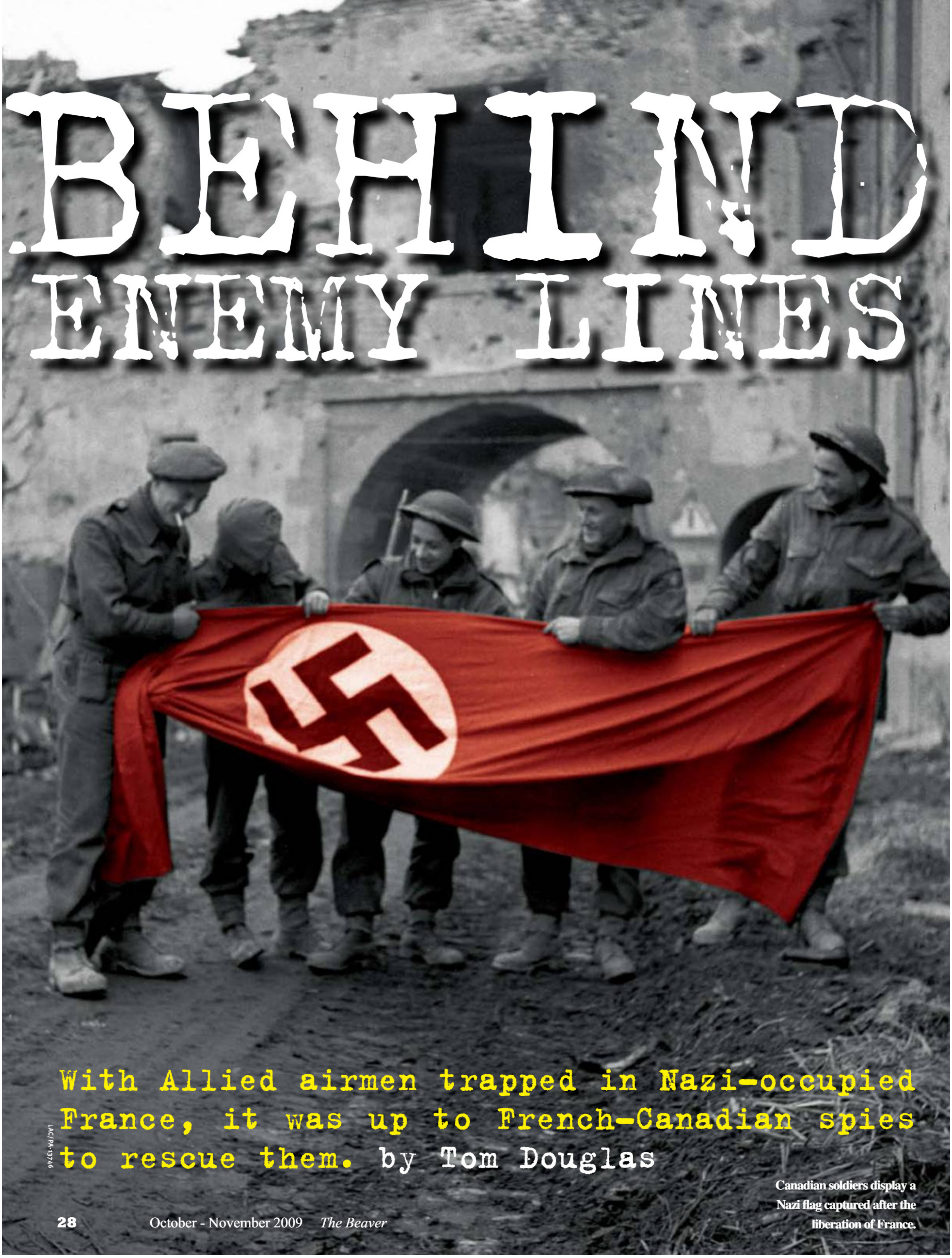
Et Cetera

Sit Down and Drink Your Beer by Robert A. Campbell. University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 2001.

BEHIND ENEMY LINES

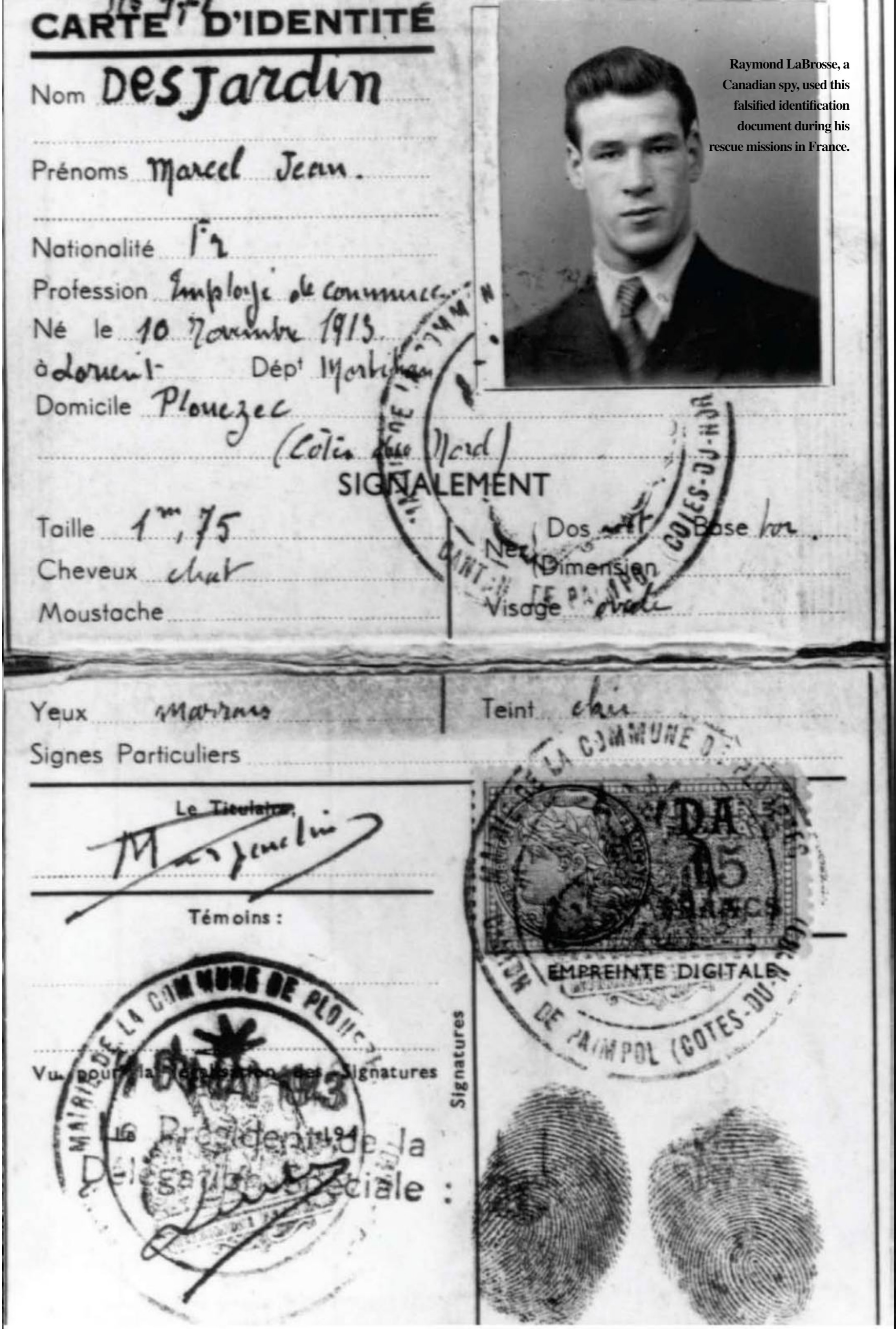
With Allied airmen trapped in Nazi-occupied France, it was up to French-Canadian spies to rescue them.

by Tom Douglas



LAC/PA-13746

Canadian soldiers display a Nazi flag captured after the liberation of France.



Raymond LaBrosse, a Canadian spy, used this falsified identification document during his rescue missions in France.

CARTE D'IDENTITÉ

Nom DesJardin

Prénoms Marcel Jean.

Nationalité Fr

Profession Employé de commerce

Né le 10 Novembre 1913

à Lorient Dépt Morbihan

Domicile Plouezec (Côtes du Nord)

SIGNALEMENT

Taille 1m,75

Cheveux chat

Moustache

Dos Base hor.

Nez Dimension

Visage ovale

Yeux marrons

Teint clair

Signes Particuliers

Le ~~Titulaire~~

Témoins :

Vu pour la légalisation des Signatures

le 194

Le Président de la Délégation spéciale :

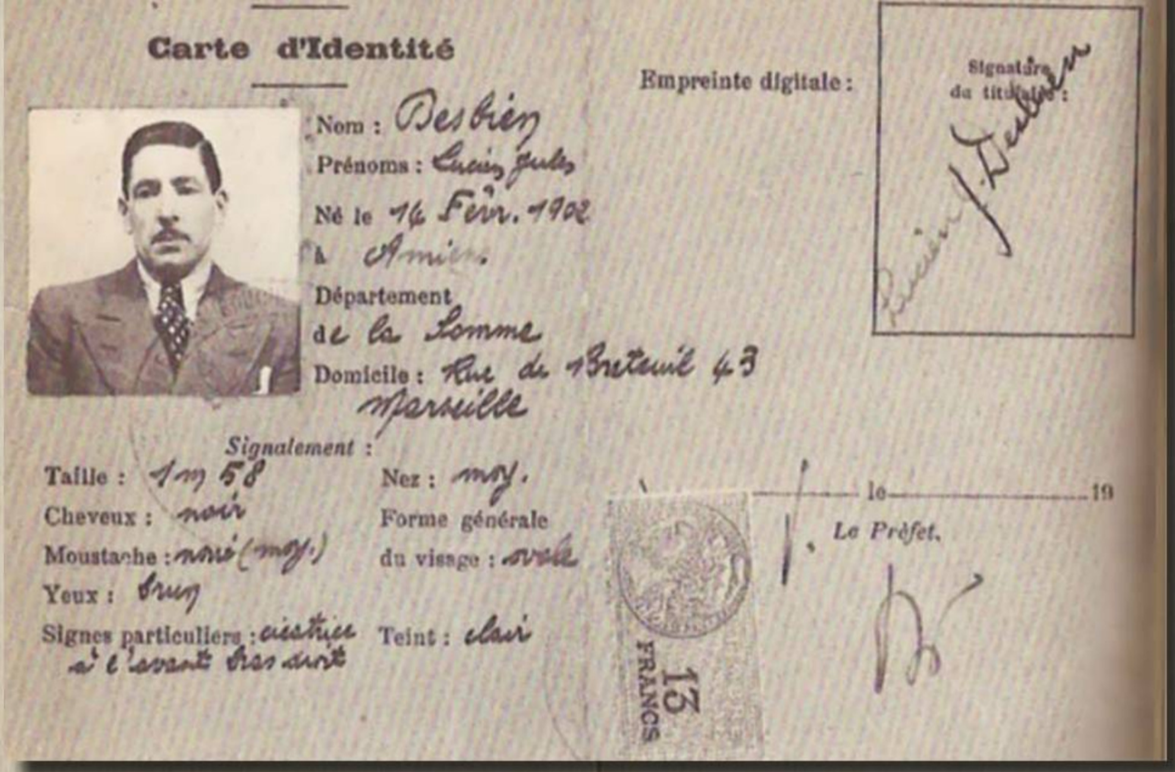
Signatures

EMPREINTE DIGITALE

MAI 1943

15 FRANCS

COURTESY RAYMOND LABROSSE



Carte d'Identité

Nom : Desbien
Prénoms : Lucien Jules
Né le 16 Févr. 1902
à Amiens
Département de la Somme
Domicile : Rue de Breteuil 43 Marseille

Signalement :
Taille : 1m 58
Cheveux : noir
Moustache : noir (moy.)
Yeux : brun
Signes particuliers : cicatrice à l'avant bras droit
Nez : moy.
Forme générale du visage : ovale
Teint : clair

Empreinte digitale :

Signature du titulaire : Lucien J. Desbien

le 19
Le Préfet,

13 FRANCS

UN CANADIEN FRANÇAIS FACE À LA GESTAPO

Right: Canadian spy Lucien Dumais used several false identities, including the name "Lucien Desbien," while operating in France. **Below:** The town of Plouha, France, where Allied airmen were hidden until they could be evacuated.

Fighting a rising sense of dread, Lucien Dumais slowed his bicycle. Standing in the bombed-out roadway ahead, with a rifle slung over his shoulder, was a German Army sergeant, signalling him to halt. It was late fall 1943. Dumais and his travelling companion, Raymond LaBrosse, had just left the French city of Rennes and were on their way to the Britanny coast to complete a dangerous task. This holdup could easily end their mission, endangering the lives of many people, including themselves.

Dumais thought fast as LaBrosse wheeled up beside him.

"We've had it if he finds the radio," the short, stocky Dumais whispered to LaBrosse. "You keep going and I'll see what he wants."

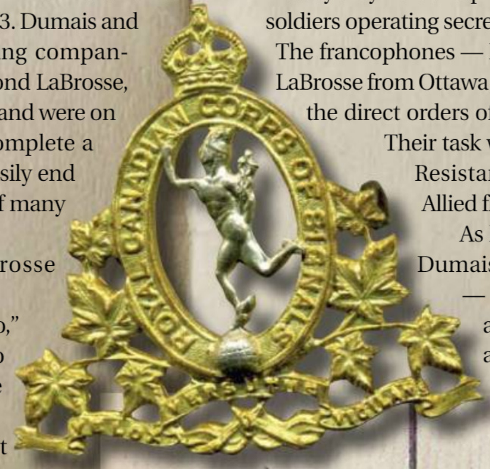
LaBrosse, taller, huskier, and almost two decades younger than his partner, continued on his way while Dumais came to a stop in front of the German, talking fast in an effort to divert the sergeant's attention.

Dumais had good reason to be worried. If the German soldier found the wireless radio hidden in a suitcase strapped to LaBrosse's bicycle, the two cyclists would either be shot immediately or taken to the nearest Gestapo headquarters, where they undoubtedly would be tortured and executed.

What made the situation even more perilous was that Dumais and LaBrosse were not who they said they were — two Frenchmen headed to the small coastal town of Plouha for work. Their identity papers named Dumais as Jean-Francois Guillou, a mortician, and LaBrosse as Marcel Desjardins, a medical equipment salesman.

In reality they were two plainclothed French-Canadian soldiers operating secretly in Nazi-occupied France. The francophones — Dumais was from Montreal, LaBrosse from Ottawa — were spies working under the direct orders of Britain's espionage agency. Their task was to work with the French Resistance in smuggling downed Allied flyers out of France.

As he pedalled away — leaving Dumais to deal with the German — LaBrosse was torn between a natural instinct to go back and help his partner and



680. - PLOUHA (C.-du-N.)
Le Dispensaire et le Groupe Scolaire.
Cl. Arthur (H. S. P.)

UN CANADIEN FRANÇAIS FACE À LA GESTAPO

a strong sense of duty. But the Canadian spy doggedly pushed on toward the Brittany coast, as ordered, though he was almost certain the effort was pointless.

Their task had been to set up an escape network — code-named Operation Bonaparte — in occupied France. With Dumais, the chef de mission, possibly out of action, the mission seemed doomed to failure. Fortunately, LaBrosse knew the plans by heart.

LaBrosse rode on until dark. He slept that night in an open field and woke up at the crack of dawn, hell-bent on reaching his destination later that day. As he approached Saint-Brieuc, a town near Plouha, he was exhausted, despondent, and thirsty. Seeing an outdoor café ahead, he decided to take a break. He noticed a man sitting at a table with two cognac glasses in front of him. LaBrosse almost fell off his bicycle when he realized who it was — Lucien Dumais! But surely this was impossible.

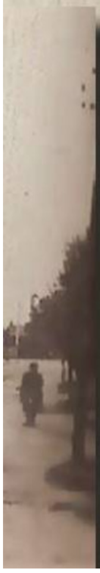
"What took you so long?" Dumais said with a grin as a shocked and elated LaBrosse sank into the chair opposite him, reached for the proffered glass and downed its contents in one swallow.

"All the German wanted was the bicycle," Dumais revealed, then went on to explain that he'd then done what any self-respecting Frenchman would do. He'd stormed off to the nearest German army post and insisted that since one of their men had stolen his bicycle, they owed him a ride to the coast. For good measure, he'd hinted he had connections to the universally feared Gestapo.

The German army vehicle that whisked Dumais to Saint-Brieuc apparently had passed right by the field where LaBrosse had collapsed, dog-tired, for the night.

Dumais and LaBrosse were the backbone of Operation Bonaparte, the Brittany segment of a larger Allied escape network called the Shelburn Line. With plans in the works to invade Normandy in June of 1944, increasing numbers of Allied aircraft were flying massive bombing raids against strategic targets in France in order to soften up the enemy. More flights meant more aircraft being shot down, so an escape network for surviving aircrew was needed.

The network was set up by the British spy agency known as M.I.9. Dumais and LaBrosse were selected as agents in charge of Operation Bonaparte because not only were they bilingual, they both had first-hand experience in escaping from France back to England.



LaBrosse first signed up for active duty with the Canadian army in 1940, when he turned eighteen. He was a sergeant in the Royal Canadian Corps of Signals when the British recruited him as their first Canadian spy.

He parachuted into France on February 28, 1943, to be the contact between a French Resistance cell in Paris and the British secret service. He was soon blowing up bridges and rail installations, as well as firing machine guns and other small arms in raids against the Germans.

But the German secret police had infiltrated the Resistance cell. Learning this, M.I.9 ordered LaBrosse to leave France at once to avoid arrest. LaBrosse radioed back that he had become mother hen to twenty-nine downed Allied flyers, most of whom spoke no French. The next M.I.9 message ordered LaBrosse to leave the others behind. He flatly refused and instead guided his flock through enemy territory, crossing over the Pyrenees mountains into Spain, then on to the British-held territory of Gibraltar on the Mediterranean.

Below: Raymond LaBrosse in New York in 1964.

UN CANADIEN FRANÇAIS FACE À LA GESTAPO

Dumais was a thirty-eight-year-old career sergeant-major with Les Fusiliers Mont-Royal when he and some two thousand other Canadian soldiers were captured in a suicide raid on the port of Dieppe in August 1942. Vowing he'd never be delivered alive to a Nazi prison camp, he escaped from the train heading to Germany. Like LaBrosse, he fled via the Pyrenees.

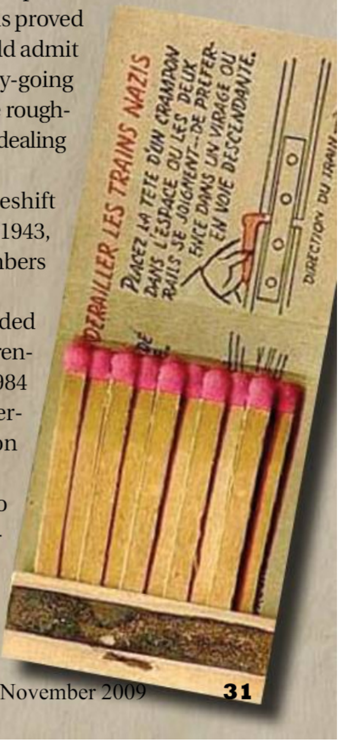
LaBrosse and Dumais met in England, where they trained together as spies. The young, soft-spoken LaBrosse and the older, tough-as-nails Dumais proved to be an excellent team, although Dumais would admit later that he had his doubts. He thought the easy-going LaBrosse would not be able to stand up to the rough-hewn French Resistance fighters they would be dealing with.

But not long after they landed at a makeshift landing strip outside of Paris on November 19, 1943, LaBrosse proved his mettle as Resistance members moved in to help them.

"Everyone started grabbing up our off-loaded equipment in their haste to get away from the rendezvous area," Dumais recounted during a 1984 return to Plouha for a French government ceremony honouring the members of Operation Bonaparte.

"Raymond's suitcase with the wireless radio was between his feet. When one of the Frenchmen reached for it, Raymond hissed: '*Laissez-ça tranquille.*' [Leave it alone!] There was a tense

Bottom: French Resistance matchbook with instructions on how to derail a train.


DERAILLER LES TRAINS NAZIS
PLACEZ LA TETE D'UN CRAMPON DANS L'ESPACE OU LES DEUX RAILS SE JOIGNENT—DE PREFERENCE DANS UN VIRAGE OU EN VOIE DESCENDANTE.
DIRECTION DU TRAIN

Two spies who did not return

Frank Pickersgill: The brother of long-time federal cabinet minister Jack Pickersgill, Frank was arrested by the Gestapo after making his first parachute jump into Nazi-occupied France on the night of June 15, 1943. He underwent excruciating torture, then was taken to Gestapo headquarters in Paris where he was told that if he co-operated by betraying his fellow agents he would be treated well for the rest of the war.

Incensed, Pickersgill grabbed a bottle of Vichy water off the interrogator's desk, smashed it against the head of one German guard, and used the shards from the broken bottle to cut the throat of a second enemy soldier. He leapt from a second-storey window and was shot four times. He survived but was immediately recaptured. Months later he was executed at Buchenwald by slow strangulation — he was hanged from a wall by a length of piano wire attached to a meathook.

Guy Bieler: A Swiss who emigrated to Canada in the 1920s, Bieler badly injured his back in a parachute jump into France on November 18, 1942. He managed to direct raids against German installations from a forest hideout even though still in great pain and barely mobile.

As soon as he was back on his feet, Bieler joined his fellow Canadian saboteurs and members of the French Resistance in destroying strategic German targets. On the night of January 15, 1944, Bieler was relaxing in a café near the village of St. Quentin when two cars screeched to a halt outside the building and a dozen German soldiers stormed through the doors. The Canadian spy was whisked away to Gestapo headquarters. After months of torture, Bieler ended up at the dreaded Flossenbürg concentration camp in Bavaria, where he was shot by firing squad.

Most Allied spies were garrotted, shot in the back of the head, or slowly strangled with piano wire. Death by firing squad was considered an honour, bestowed by a camp commandant who respected Bieler's courage and calm demeanour while undergoing terrible torture and deprivation.

And one who did

Gabriel Chartrand: Known as Gaby to his friends, he was the third Canadian parachuted into France in 1943. He was picked up returning to Tours by bicycle after helping an American pilot escape.

Realizing he had to make a break for it before he was swallowed up in the Gestapo interrogation centre he was being taken to, Chartrand threw his bicycle at the German agent who had arrested him, then took off at a run. Zigzagging to dodge the bullets fired from the agent's pistol, Chartrand returned to his small apartment and picked up a set of false identification papers he had squirrelled away earlier.

He managed to contact a fellow agent and was put in the pipeline to Plouha, Brittany, where two Canadian spies were able to help him escape across the English Channel to freedom. The spies aiding him in his escape, he learned after the war, were Lucien Dumais and Raymond LaBrosse.

moment as the two men eyed each other. Then the Resistance fighter gave a small smile and a shrug and left the suitcase alone — as Raymond had ordered. The moment passed without incident."

They easily passed as French nationals. Any locals or German soldiers they dealt with regarded their Quebec accent as a dialect from some remote French village.

"What one had to be very careful about," LaBrosse would say later, "was not to use French-Canadian slang or idiomatic expressions. If you spoke correct French but had an accent, that didn't tell anyone you were Canadian."

Upon landing in France, they immediately set to work — planning escape routes, selecting hideouts, and arranging for the delivery of supplies and weapons. They recruited dozens of French civilians to funnel the fugitive airmen to Plouha, a tiny coastal village with a strong Resistance cell, where airmen could be hidden until they could be evacuated off a nearby beach.

The next few weeks raced by and the two men were soon ready to launch Operation Bonaparte. Finally, on the night of January 29, 1944, Dumais and LaBrosse were listening to a low-volume radio in a small stone farmhouse in Plouha when they heard a welcome phrase: "*Bonjour tout le monde à la maison d'Alphonse!*"

In bringing greetings to everyone at the house of Alphonse, the announcer from the BBC French Service had uttered a call to action. A Royal Navy Motor Gun Boat (MGB) had left Dartmouth, England, and was streaking across the 140-kilometre expanse of the English Channel toward the coast of Brittany. The rescue was on. The agents quickly switched off the radio. "That's it," said LaBrosse. Dumais turned to the third man in the room, section chief François LeCornec, and nodded: "Let's go!"

The Plouha area was crawling with German troops, Gestapo agents, and French collaborators. It was common knowledge that the Allies were planning a massive invasion of France. The tense, trigger-happy Germans were likely to shoot first and ask questions later.

As they exited the "House of Alphonse" — a misnomer, since the small stone dwelling actually belonged to French Resistance member Jean Gicquel — Dumais and LaBrosse could make out a number of human forms moving in the darkness toward them from other houses in the area. The escape party consisted of sixteen American and RAF airmen and two British agents. LaBrosse had sent a message to M.I.9 earlier that day saying he had eighteen "packages" to be picked up.

With the eighteen "packages" forming a huddle around him, Dumais whispered last-minute instructions for getting down the nearby steep incline to the beach. He warned them that the slope had been mined by the Germans but that a Resistance member had marked each mine with a small white cloth. Dumais would lead the way by the light of a hooded flashlight, and everyone was to follow in his exact footsteps down to the beach about seventy-five metres below.

"Many lives have been risked to bring you this far," Dumais warned. "There is just a mile left, and it is the most dangerous you will ever travel. You will maintain absolute silence and do exactly as you are told. There are enemy sentries and patrols in the area. If it becomes necessary to kill any of them you are expected to help — use knives or your hands. Be quick and above all be quiet. Your lives and ours depend on it."

With LaBrosse bringing up the rear, the men moved stealthily down the small hillside to the beach. Shivering in the damp cold, they strained their eyes and ears for some sign of their rescuers. The minutes dragged by. Suddenly, out of the darkness, the silhouettes of four small rubber boats appeared, each manned by two paddlers. The craft nosed silently up onto the sand and the eight crew members of the gunboat, which was anchored about two kilometres out in the channel, jumped ashore.

An officer snapped: "Okay, get aboard fast." At the same time, the crew began off-loading arms, money, and supplies desperately needed by the French Resistance.

Within a few minutes the four rubber dinghies were relaunched, disappearing into the gloom. Dumais and LaBrosse watched them go, then picked up the delivered goods and carefully made their way back to the stone hut, retrieving the pieces of cloth that had identified the placement of the German mines.

While awaiting the 6 a.m. lifting of the German curfew so they could move about the village freely, Dumais raised a wine glass in a toast: "*Eh bien.* To our first success. It went like clockwork. But we have a busy season ahead."

By the time the Allies landed in Normandy with their D-Day offensive of June 6, 1944, Operation Bonaparte had, in the space of six months, saved 135 Allied fugitives from right under the noses of the Gestapo without losing a single man. Dumais and LaBrosse had certainly proven their worth.

"Our judgment of both men was fulfilled, and they produced magnificent results," Airey Neave, chief organizer of M.I.9 during the last two years of the Second World War, said in his book *Saturday at M.I.9.*

After D-Day, Dumais and LaBrosse worked with the French underground to fight the retreating Germans. Following the Nazi surrender in May of 1945, Dumais was assigned to root out German collaborators in deep cover. He retired with the rank of captain at the end of the war and proudly wore such decorations as the Military Cross, the Military Medal, the Efficiency Medal, and the Freedom Medal.

LaBrosse rejoined the Canadian Army after the war, eventually serving with the Third Battalion of the Royal 22nd Regiment — the Vandoos — in Korea. He retired with the rank of lieutenant colonel in 1971. Among his awards were the Military Cross, the Legion of Honour, the French Croix de Guerre (*avec palme et étoile de vermeille*), and the U.S. Medal of Liberty with silver bar.

Unfortunately, the crew of the gunboat — MGB 503 — that had been used for each rescue didn't fare as well as the two Canadian spies. The boat hit a floating mine in the English Channel — sadly, just after hostilities had ceased — and the entire crew of thirty-six was killed.

TOM DOUGLAS

Lucien Dumais (left) and Raymond LaBrosse in 1984, linking arms with a woman who was a member of the French Resistance. The former spies were in France to mark the fortieth anniversary of the operation that rescued dozens of Allied airmen from the country.

Another casualty was the House of Alphonse. After Operation Bonaparte had been disbanded, the Germans belatedly suspected that the small cottage was being used as a Resistance hideout and torched it, with only the stone walls surviving as witnesses to a clandestine operation.

Due to its nature, Operation Bonaparte received little publicity during or after the Second World War. In fact, when orders were issued to turn papers over to the public archives in Great Britain, it was discovered that several volumes of records about the project had disappeared.

But some of the ninety-four American airmen who had been spirited out of occupied France showed their appreciation by holding a special ceremony in Buffalo, New York, in 1964. LaBrosse and Dumais were on hand, along with two former Resistance members, when William Spinning, vice-president of the newly formed Air Forces Escape & Evasion Society said: "Theirs were calculated feats of audacious, rash fearlessness — carried out under the very eyes of the German occupational forces. The odds against success were staggering. The penalties for failure were almost incalculable. We of America can never repay these noble people. Nothing can ever balance the score, and nothing will ever dull the glory.

"In greatest humility we say: We will never forget!"

Tom Douglas, copy editor of *The Canadian Military Journal*, has written six books with a military theme. For more information, go to: www.tomdouglas.typepad.com.

Et Cetera

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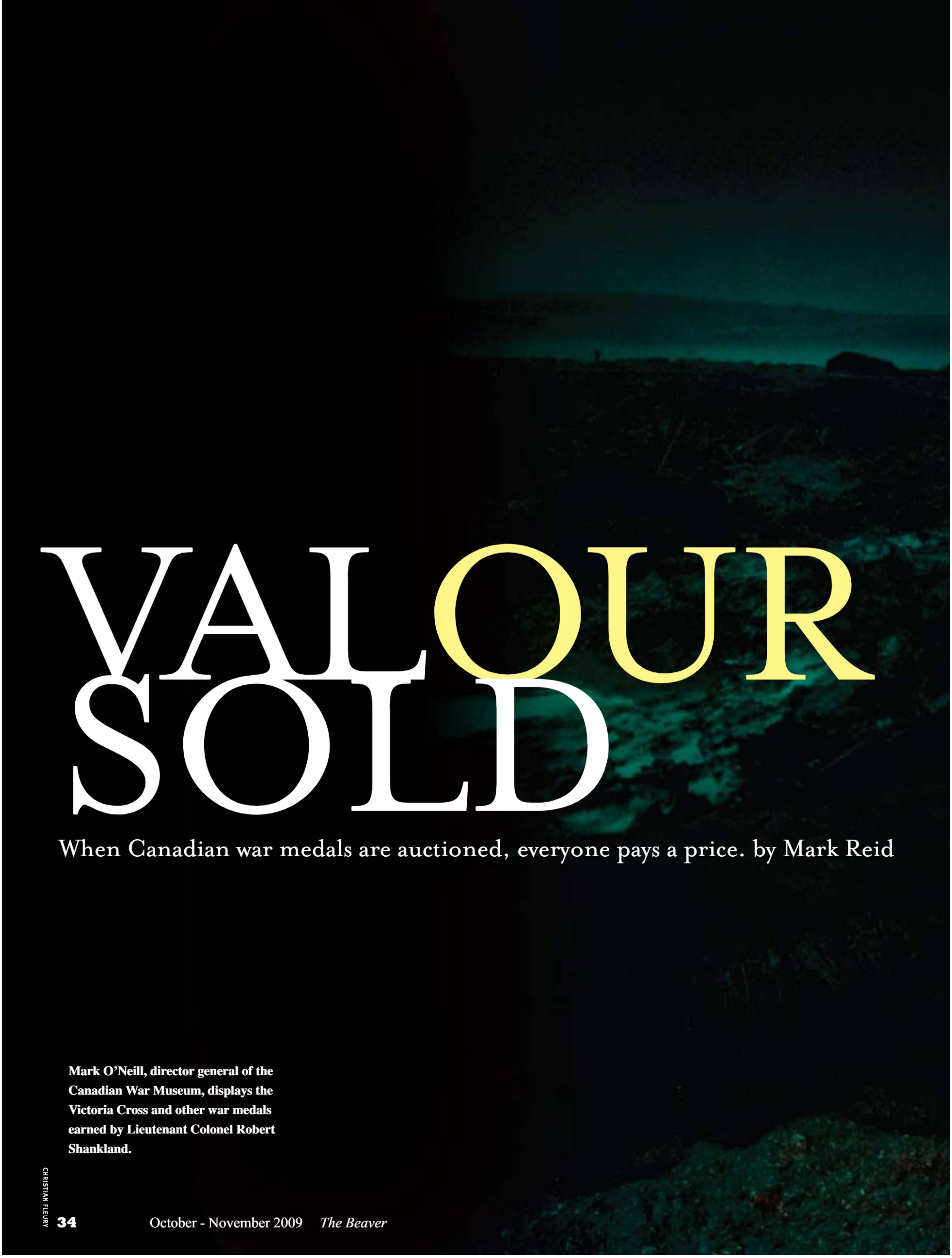
VALOUR SOLD

When Canadian war medals are auctioned, everyone pays a price. by Mark Reid



Mark O'Neill, director general of the Canadian War Museum, displays the Victoria Cross and other war medals earned by Lieutenant Colonel Robert Shankland.

CHRISTIAN FLEURY

A few bits of cloth and bronze.

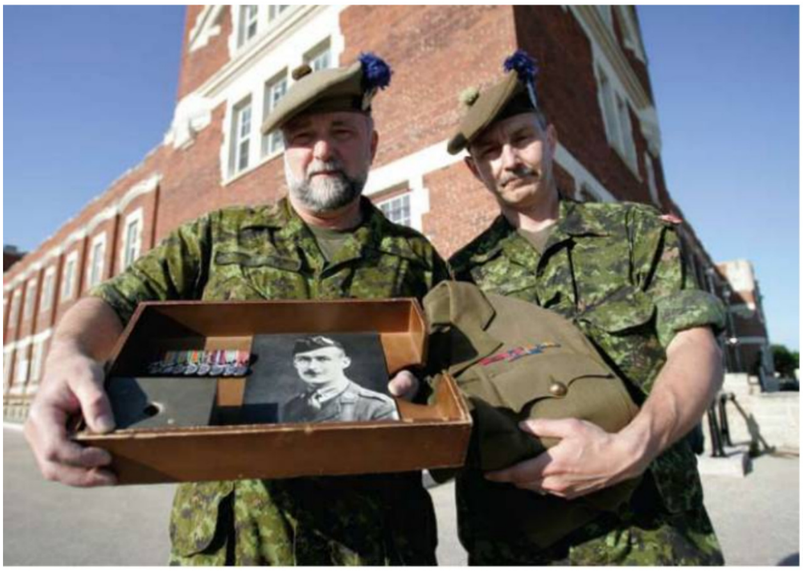
Taken separately, they're virtually worthless. Combine them just so — according to specifics set out by Queen Victoria in 1856 — and they transform into something priceless: a Victoria Cross.

Soldiers have fought, and died, while winning them. Collectors have paid small fortunes to acquire them, and thieves have stopped at nothing to steal them. In truth, the Victoria Cross is greater than the sum of its parts — it's the most prized commodity in a lucrative, and controversial, worldwide trade in war medals.

Last spring, the venerable VC became the focus of a national controversy when one of Canada's most famous crosses was put up for auction. The medal belonged to Robert Shankland, one of three Victoria Cross winners who lived on Winnipeg's famed Valour Road.

The thought of a cherished symbol of Canadian courage being sold to the highest bidder angered many. On radio call-in shows, in online forums, and in newspapers, Canadians weighed in. "Medals are not currency," cried a headline in the *Toronto Sun*. "Conflict expected as Victoria Cross set to be auctioned," blared the *National Post*.

The Victoria Cross, a relic from an almost-forgotten age, was suddenly on the radar. Soon, questions were flying: Why do people sell valour medals? Who is buying them? Should the federal government ban their sale? And if not, does Ottawa have an obligation — moral or otherwise — to keep the Victoria Cross in Canada, regardless of the cost?



MARK REID

Above: Grant Tyler, left, and Hugh O'Donnell of the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders of Winnipeg display artifacts belonging to Victoria Cross winner Robert Shankland. Right: The metal box that saved Shankland's life during the battle of Passchendaele in 1917.

It's early May 2009, and the snow has finally melted from the grounds of Winnipeg's Minto Armoury.

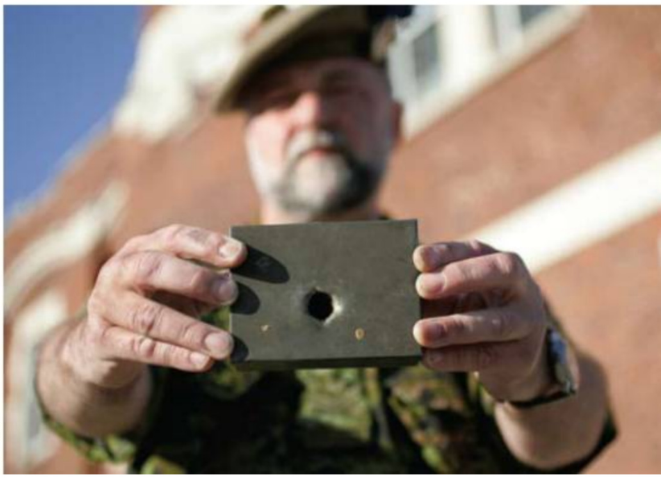
Located a few blocks from Valour Road, the squat brick building is home to the regimental museum of the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders of Canada. Open Tuesday and Thursday evenings, the museum is tucked away on the second floor. Heading through the door, you're greeted by a diorama of a Canadian First World War trench. Antique weapons, including a Ross rifle and a Bren gun, are mounted on a nearby wall. But it's the small glass case at the back of the cramped room that holds the regiment's most storied possession: a small tin box with a hole blown through it. The box still holds the fudge it was carrying in 1917.

The box and its sweet, sticky contents likely saved Lieutenant Robert Shankland's life at the battle of Passchendaele, during which he earned the Victoria Cross. It certainly stopped the German bullet destined for his chest.

Shankland, who was later promoted to lieutenant colonel in World War II, served with the Highlanders, and the museum owns several of his effects — his photos, his uniform, and a miniature set of replica war medals, including a tiny Victoria Cross.

The museum would love to replace the replicas with the real deal. But it will not be among the potential buyers in Toronto on May 25, 2009, to bid on the medals.

Like most small museums in Canada, it doesn't have the money.

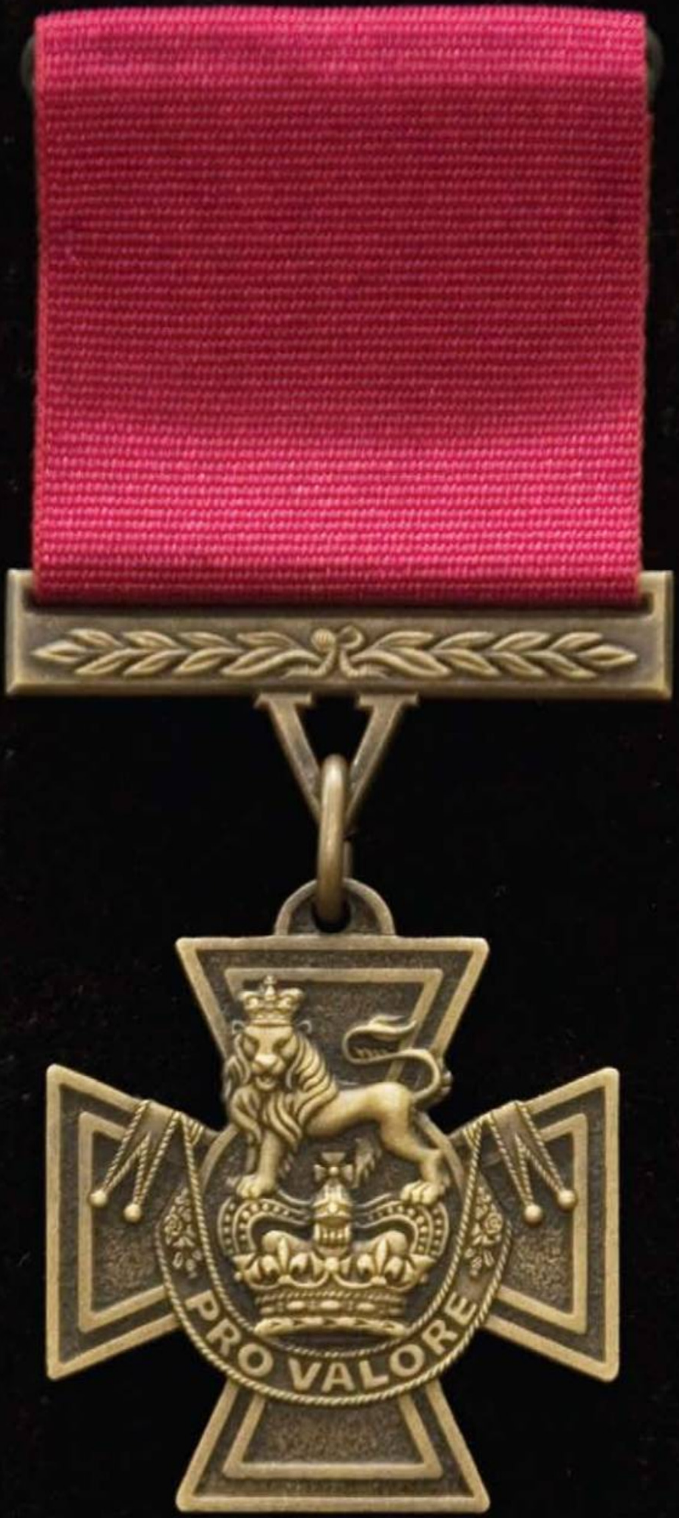


MARK REID

"What can I tell you?" Hugh O'Donnell, a chief warrant officer with the Cameron Highlanders, says. "It's like standing by at a car accident — you're just watching what happens. It's not a good feeling to stand by and watch something of such significance go by the board."

The truth is, only governments — or certain private collectors — can afford the exorbitant sums the medals command.

CANADIAN PRESS



The Canadian version of the Victoria Cross.

Victoria Cross by the numbers

153 Years since the creation of the Victoria Cross. **62** The number of Victoria Crosses awarded by Queen Victoria on June 26, 1857, the date the medal was first presented. **21** The age of the first Canadian to receive the Victoria Cross, Lieutenant Alexander Roberts Dunn, who earned his medal during the Crimean War's Battle of Balaklava in 1854. **1,356** The number of Victoria Crosses awarded to date. **96** The number of Canadians awarded the Victoria Cross, including twenty-nine who received it posthumously. **3** The number of countries — Canada, Australia, and New Zealand — that created their own version of the Victoria Cross. To accommodate bilingualism, the inscription "for valour" was replaced with the Latin "*pro valore*" in the Canadian version. **2008** The year the Canadian version of the Victoria Cross was first unveiled.

Case in point: Of the seventy-two Victoria Crosses put up for sale since 1998, forty-five have been snatched up by one British billionaire: Baron Michael Ashcroft. Lord Ashcroft is the sixty-fifth-richest man in Britain. He owns 152 Victoria Crosses, and his Ashcroft Trust VC collection is the largest private grouping of crosses in the world.

Collecting Victoria Crosses is Ashcroft's passion. In a podcast interview on his personal website, the sixty-three-year-old businessman explains how he has been fascinated by the subject of bravery since he was a schoolboy. In 1986, he bought his first Victoria Cross.

REUTERS/DAN CHUNG

British businessman Michael Ashcroft has the largest private collection of Victoria Crosses in the world.

"I can still remember the feeling of exhilaration," he says. "It's a tangible relic of a brave act, with no intrinsic value. But yet, there is a surge of electricity when you hold it in your hand and look at it and know the story of the courage behind that little piece of metal."

Valour medals, unlike campaign or service medals, are specifically awarded for acts of bravery and heroism on the battlefield. That's what makes them so valuable to collectors.

A couple of weeks before the Shankland auction, Ashcroft's personal medals curator, Michael Naxton, agrees to chat about the upcoming sale. Naxton is a former medals evaluator for Sotheby's auction house in London, England. He says he plans to meet with Ashcroft on the coming Thursday to discuss whether they should attempt to buy Shankland's VC.

"We might put in a bid," he says with a refined British accent. "I don't know yet. Nothing has been decided — but we are well aware that if we were to put in a bid, there could be great problems. To get it out [of Canada] might prove so complicated and so controversial, maybe Lord Ashcroft won't put in a bid."

Ashcroft sees himself as the unofficial protector of the VC, and of the stories of the men who have won them. Not everyone agrees.

"There are groups of people who hold wildly different views about whether or not these medals should or should not be sold. Those views are never going to be reconciled," Naxton says.

"To the people who say that medals should never be sold: What about the poor, penniless widow of an ordinary soldier killed while winning the Victoria Cross? Why shouldn't she sell it, in order to make sure her children have food on the table and shoes on their feet?"

If Queen Victoria were alive today, she would not be amused to see her namesake medal transformed into a commodity for collectors.

Victoria created the VC in 1856, in the wake of the Crimean War. Until then, valour medals had traditionally gone to officers, not enlisted men. These were generally men from well-to-do families who would never consider selling their war medals — and likely didn't need the money.

The VC, though, was created to be blind to rank or status. By the time of the Great War, it was increasingly the common foot soldier in the trenches who was receiving the VC. And, as time went on, more crosses began appearing for sale on the open market.

According to the British website VictoriaCross.org.uk, seventy-two VCs have been put up for auction since 1998, netting at least $11.2 million. (Seven were sold for undisclosed amounts.)

The highest price paid during this period was approximately $765,000, for a VC earned by Australian WWI veteran Captain Alfred Shout. The lowest was $1,400 for a replacement issued to English Able Seaman George Hinckley, who earned the original in 1862 during the Second China War.

Due to its connection to Winnipeg's Valour Road — VC winners Corporal Leonard Clarke and Company Sergeant-Major Frederick William Hall also lived on this street — the medal set that includes Shankland's VC is valued between $220,000 and $330,000.

"It's real money," says Jack Granatstein, the military historian and former director general and CEO of the Canadian War Museum in Ottawa. "It's basically the [annual] acquisition budget for most large museums in Canada."

Granatstein has no issues with veterans who sell their medals — but he does see the value in keeping valour medals in Canada.

One way to ensure this happens is to ban their sale. This has been done elsewhere. For instance, the United States bans the sale of its highest award for military valour, the Medal of Honor. In 2005, the U.S. Stolen Valor Act also made it illegal to impersonate a medal winner, or wear another recipient's award. Violators can face up to a year's imprisonment and a six-figure fine.

CANADIAN PRESS

A Canadian soldier escorts German prisoners wearing gas masks near Ypres, Belgium, in April 1915. More Victoria Crosses (633, plus two bars) were awarded during the First World War than in any subsequent conflict.

In Canada, NDP MP Peter Stoffer has been working for ten years to get similar legislation passed. His private member's bill, C-208, would make it illegal to sell a Canadian military or police medal.

With the date of the Shankland auction approaching, Stoffer, the NDP's veterans affairs critic, reintroduces his bill in the House of Commons. He's backed by the Royal Canadian Legion.

"Some people believe it's their medal, and they can do what they want with it," says Legion spokesman Bob Butt. "We look at it as a memorial [to the person who earned the medal]."

As the controversy surrounding the auction heats up, Veterans Affairs Minister Greg Thompson responds by promising to do "whatever it takes" to keep the medals in the country. Despite this vow, uneasiness remains. There's a growing feeling that Shankland's medals will in fact be spirited out of Canada by an outsider.

After tense weeks of waiting, the May 25 auction arrives.

On the day of the sale, Stoffer issues a statement: "This is a sad day in Canada because World War I hero Robert Shankland's medals are for sale. Today we will lose a significant part of our collective history. It is a loss to all Canadians and could have been prevented."

In Toronto, medal collectors, history buffs, and others gather at Bonhams Canada auction house at 55 Hazelton Lanes to witness the historic auction. The sellers are not disclosed, but they're believed to be members of his family. Bidding begins on Lot No. 27 — the Shankland medal set. Across the country, many Canadians hold their breath. Will Lord Ashcroft add another bauble to his collection?

The gavel drops. The auctioneer cries out, "Sold!"

The bid: $288,000.

The buyer: The Canadian War Museum in Ottawa.

Reached a few days after the sale, the War Museum's general director, Mark O'Neill, is still beaming. For weeks, he reveals, the War Museum had been working behind the scenes to prepare its bid.

"We had to move very, very quickly and very, very quietly," O'Neill says. "Time was of the essence." While the debate raged in the media, officials at the museum had sought to avoid the spotlight. "All it does, frankly, is drive up the price," he says.

In Winnipeg, the result of the auction is greeted with joy from the members of the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders.

"All's well that ends well," says O'Donnell, the chief warrant officer.

"It really is a relief," adds Murray Burt, the secretary of the regiment's advisory board.

"The Victoria Cross is a national jewel. I was happy to see it go to the War Museum."

To purchase Shankland's medals, the War Museum tapped its $1.5-million National Collection Fund, which is specifically for acquisitions. It's a bankroll that many smaller museums across Canada would love to have.

"There are very few institutions in this country … that have the capacity of purchasing power to make this kind of purchase," O'Neill says. "Happily, for us, it's not an either-or situation. The most important thing was to make sure that some institution in Canada was able to acquire the medal set — and we've done that for Canadians."

With the Shankland purchase, the War Museum now has thirty-one Canadian Victoria Crosses in its collection. According to the Department of Canadian Heritage, they are among the sixty-five VCs held in public collections in Canada. Another eight Canadian crosses are part of public collections in England.

Of the twenty-three not held by the public, two were stolen in the 1970s and their whereabouts are unknown, while twenty-one VCs are held by private collectors or family members of the recipients.

What will become of these medals? Will the War Muse-

MATTHEW SINCLAIR MEMORIAL LODGE

Jim Bear, the nephew of Canadian war hero Tommy Prince.

Medals missing in action

People sell war medals for all kinds of reasons. Sometimes it's greed. Sometimes it's need. And sometimes we simply don't know why.

That's the case for Tommy Prince, Canada's most decorated aboriginal soldier. A crack shot and expert scout, Prince earned both the Military Medal and the American Silver Star during a 1944 mission with the Devil's Brigade — the famed Canadian-American World War II commando unit. In all, he received eleven medals during tours in the Second World War and in Korea.

But he struggled after returning to the home front, facing racism and likely suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. He eventually turned to the bottle and died virtually destitute in 1977. Prince was just sixty-two.

At some point, he parted with his war medals. He likely sold them, although it's possible one or more had been stolen or lost over the years.

"My uncle went through a tremendous amount," says Jim Bear, Prince's nephew. "So whatever happened to Tommy in terms of the medals … I can never condemn him for what happened. He needed money at the time — but possibly with hopes he would get [the medals] back at another time."

In 2001, Prince's medals came up for auction. By that time, Prince had become a household name, helped in part by a 1999 film, *Fallen Hero: The Tommy Prince Story*.

When the media announced the looming sale, Bear was determined to repatriate his uncle's medals and bring them back to Manitoba. He began a campaign to raise the large amount of money he would need.

"I guess what bothers me is the price, that there should be such a gigantic profit for these medals," Bear says. "The price gets so outrageous, the fella on the street can't even afford to bid on them."

Donations poured in. Soon, he found himself in a London, Ontario, auction house, engaged in a tense bidding war.

The final offer was $72,000. Suddenly, the medals were back in Prince's family. "When we found out we won … I couldn't talk," says Bear. "It really hit me, I was just too emotional for words."

Bear donated the medals to the Manitoba Museum, and says proudly that "they are never to be sold again." — M.R.

um always be able to ride to the rescue if they're put up for auction?

It turns out the War Museum wasn't the only institution secretly working to secure the Shankland medals.

Murray Burt says the Highlanders had quietly been lining up philanthropists to contribute to a matching bid for the medals if they had been sold to a foreign buyer.

"There was no way we were going to dash in and try to bid on the first bidding. It would have been foolhardy," Burt says. "But we couldn't just let it go without a fight."

Under the federal Cultural Property Export and Import Act, foreign buyers of "culturally significant" items must obtain an export permit before removing them from the country.

The federal government can refuse to grant the permit for up to six months to give recognized Canadian institutions, like the Cameron Highlanders, time to raise money for a matching bid — which, under the act, the foreign buyer must then accept, says Dominique Collin, spokeswoman for Canadian Heritage.

There are other regulatory protections in place. For instance, the federal Movable Cultural Property Program offers funding for approved institutions to help purchase significant items. The program has been used twice since 1997 to keep Victoria Crosses in Canada. Ottawa also offers tax incentives to Canadians who donate war medals to museums.

These programs, aimed at keeping war medals in Canada, raise the question: Is there something inherently wrong with allowing valour medals to fall into the hands of private collectors?

Consider the case of Lord Ashcroft. For years, he endured criticism for hoarding Victoria Crosses. Now he's being hailed as a hero after announcing an almost $10-million donation to the Imperial War Museum in London to fund a permanent public exhibit of his VC collection.

"Those who criticized [Lord Ashcroft] for having bought so many Victoria Crosses are now being forced, in many cases, to eat their words," Naxton, the medals curator, says. "[Ashcroft's exhibit] will be the greatest and most spectacular display of bravery medals the world has ever seen. He has indeed done a great public service."

And what of small-time collectors? Are they really the black hats in this story?

Floyd Migory, a retiree living in London, Ontario, is the president of the Canadian Society of Military Medals and Insignia, an association founded in 1965 to represent medal dealers and collectors. He points out that collectors often report stolen medals to authorities, and will even try to connect missing medals with the recipients' families.

And while it's all well and good to argue medals shouldn't be sold, "lots of times, there is no more family,"

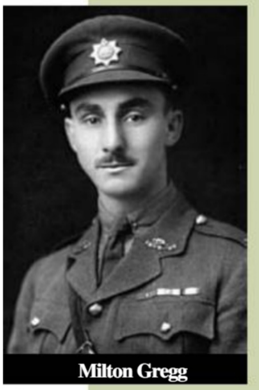
Stolen glory

Valour medals are tempting targets for thieves.

It's Christmas Eve 1979 and all's quiet at the Royal Canadian Regiment Museum in London, Ontario. The customary rounds of "Season's greetings!" have been said and the staff members are settled in at home for the annual Christmas break.

A few hardy souls still scramble about the streets on this winter's night. Most who pass by Wolseley Hall are oblivious to recent additions to the elegant stone building — iron bars on the windows, reinforced locks, and a "burglar-proof" display case. But at least one person knows about these security features — and knows how to get around them.

The security is meant to protect a precious collection of war medals, including a Victoria Cross won in autumn 1918 near Cambrai, France.


Milton Gregg

CANADIAN PRESS

Milton Gregg, then a lieutenant, earned this VC while storming a series of German trenches. Twice injured, he personally killed or wounded eleven enemy soldiers, made prisoners of twenty-five more, and captured twelve machine guns. A few days later, he led another courageous assault before being wounded a third time.

As the Commonwealth's highest medal for valour, any VC is special. But this one carried extra lustre thanks to Gregg's later achievements: He served in World War II, then spent ten years as a federal MP and cabinet minister, and later held key positions within the United Nations.

Gregg's extraordinary medal collection was thus a tempting target. That's why, sometime during the 1979 Christmas holiday, someone broke into the museum, smashed the display case, and swiped the medals.

"It was devastating," says Claus Breede, the current curator of the RCR museum. "It was almost like stealing the church silver."

Sadly, this theft is not an isolated case.

Worldwide, at least fifteen stolen Victoria Crosses — including one belonging to another Canadian soldier, Captain Edward Bellew — remain unaccounted for. They've been swiped from private homes and public institutions, including, of all places, Coventry Cathedral in England. The Bellew medal was taken sometime between 1975 and 1977 from the Royal Canadian Military Institute in Toronto.

More recently, thieves lifted ninety-six medals, including nine Victoria Crosses, from the Waiouru Army Museum in New Zealand. The total value of the 2007 heist was an estimated C$6.9 million. The medals were recovered in February 2008 after billionaire medal collector Michael Ashcroft posted a NZ$200,000 reward. Lord Ashcroft later offered a further NZ$200,000 for information about the perpetrators. So far, no one has been arrested. — M.R.

CANADIAN PRESS

Ernest "Smokey" Smith, the last Canadian to be awarded the Victoria Cross. This photo was taken in 2004, a year before his death.

he says. "There's no wife, no children. The medal is given to the mother … and it's put in a drawer.

"As years go by, people are forgotten and it vanishes. People never get to see them. If they're in the hands of collectors, they're displayed, researched, and talked about."

One thing seems certain — as time passes, the value of the Victoria Cross will continue to rise.

Consider these statistics: According to the British National Archives, 633 VCs, plus two bars, were awarded during the First World War. In the Second World War, that figure plummeted to 182, plus one bar. Since World War II, the VC has been handed out just thirteen times.

To put that in perspective, since World War II, more than twenty-six thousand Canadians have fought in Korea. Thousands more have served in various NATO and United Nations peacekeeping missions around the world. And, of course, Canadian troops are still in Afghanistan fighting the Taliban.

In all that time, not a single Canadian combatant has earned a VC.

In fact, the odds of winning a Victoria Cross are decreasing daily thanks to the changing nature of warfare in the twenty-first century. Massive battles involving tens of thousands of troops in close combat have all but disappeared. Death for today's soldiers usually comes courtesy of guided missiles, long-range rifles, or improvised explosive devices (IEDs).

Canada's last VC winner, WWII soldier Ernest "Smokey" Smith, died in 2005. His like are not being replaced.

"It is inevitable these bravery medals will become even rarer as time goes by," Naxton says. "It's why it is so important to celebrate the memory of these great heroes of the past — because so few are being created in modern times."

In the end, the debate over buying and selling war medals is one of priorities. Does owning the actual physical medal help preserve the stories of the men who won them and of the conflicts they fought in? Or are there other ways of passing on the memory of war?

"The question, to me, comes down to what is the best use of $300,000?" says Granatstein, the former War Museum director. "To buy a Victoria Cross? Or to design a major teaching module that can be put online and reach a million kids? People have to decide where they want to put their emphasis."

It's now months after the Shankland sale. With the medals safely stored in the War Museum in Ottawa, the public's attention has turned elsewhere — and it will likely stay elsewhere until the next high-profile Canadian Victoria Cross is sold.

For many of us, the Shankland saga has been an emotional but largely abstract spectacle. Those of us who have never served in the military, nor fought on a field of battle, likely find it difficult to comprehend the depth of passion that surrounds the Victoria Cross and other war medals.

"It's very difficult to explain what a medal means [to civilians]," agrees Bob Butt, the Legion spokesman. "But once somebody gets one … they will never forget it, I can tell you."

Is it wrong to sell valour medals? Perhaps it's simply inevitable.

The words of Floyd Migory, the Ontario medals collector, linger. During a conversation last spring, he said he would never consider selling his family's war medals.

"But that's just me," he added, "and fifty years from now, they will be in somebody else's hands. We never own anything. We might buy some medals, but we never own them — we're just holding them for the next guy down the line. Somewhere down the line, everything gets disposed of, one way or the other."

Mark Reid is the editor of *The Beaver*.

Et Cetera

Victoria Cross Heroes: Men of Valour by Michael Ashcroft. Headline Book Publishing, London, 2006.

Supreme Courage: Heroic Stories from 150 Years of the VC by General Sir Peter de la Billière. Little Brown, London, 2004.

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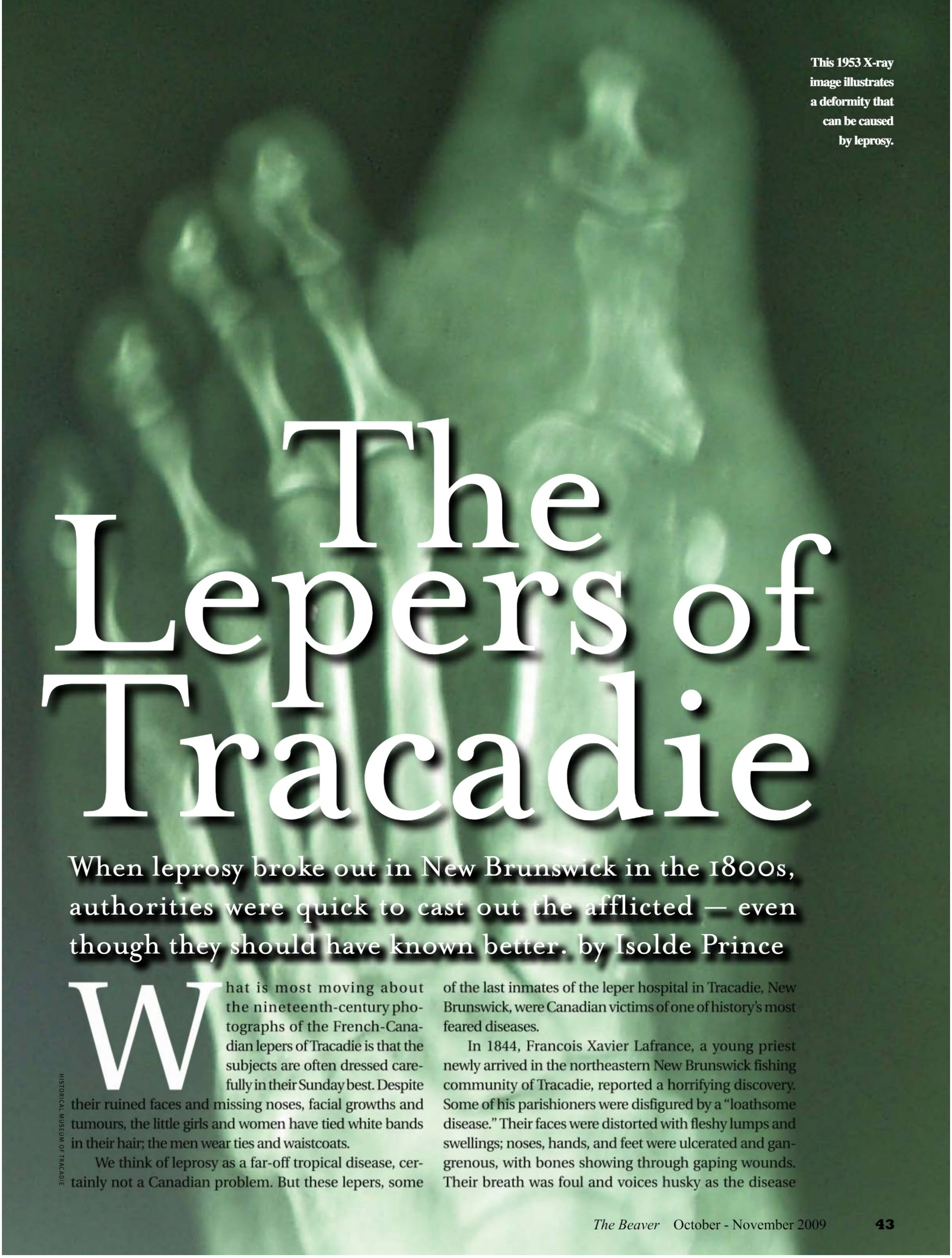
To hear a podcast interview with Mark O'Neill, the general director of the Canadian War Museum, go to: TheBeaver.ca



This 1953 X-ray image illustrates a deformity that can be caused by leprosy.

HISTORICAL MUSEUM OF TRACADIE

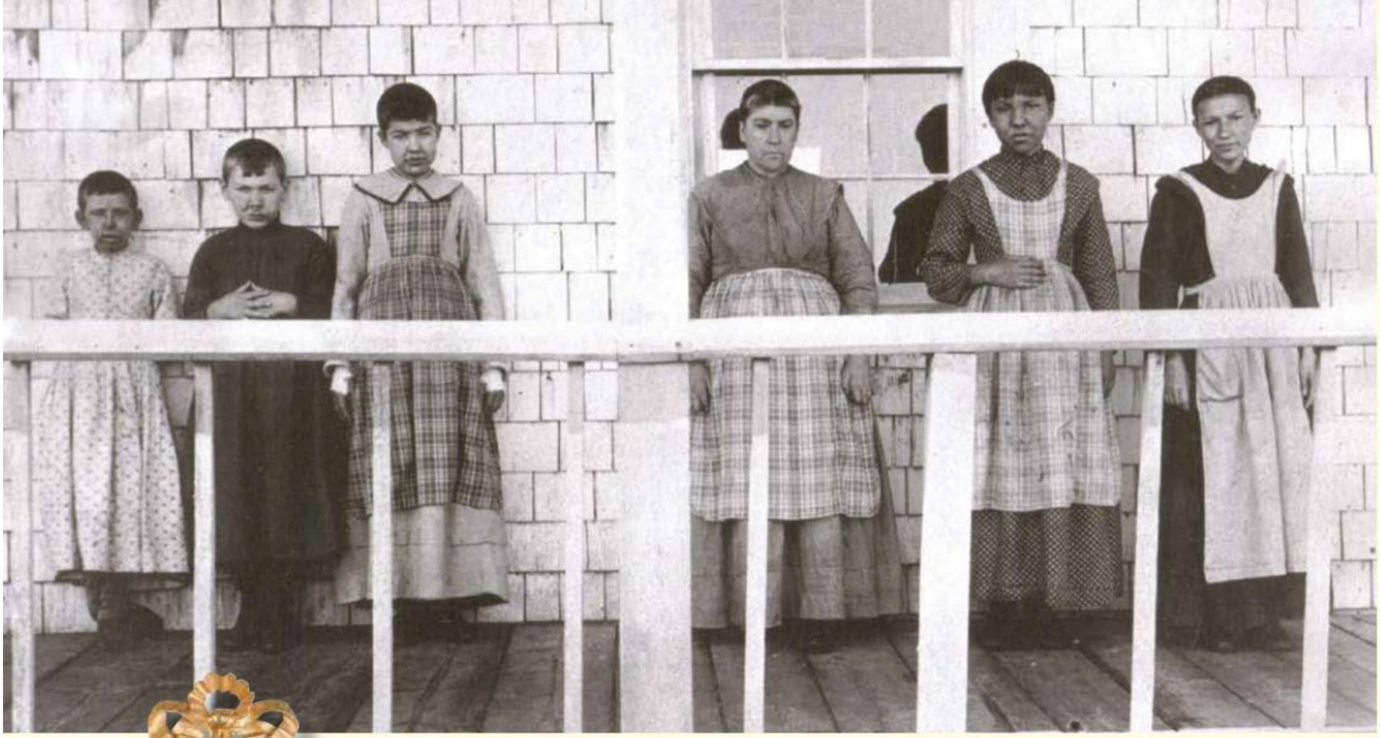
The Lepers of Tracadie

When leprosy broke out in New Brunswick in the 1800s, authorities were quick to cast out the afflicted — even though they should have known better. by Isolde Prince

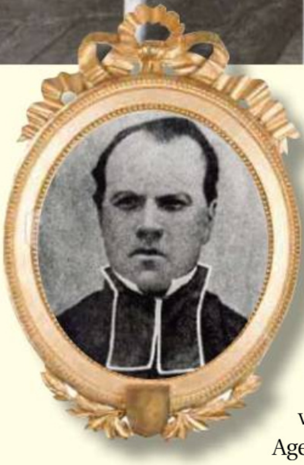
What is most moving about the nineteenth-century photographs of the French-Canadian lepers of Tracadie is that the subjects are often dressed carefully in their Sunday best. Despite their ruined faces and missing noses, facial growths and tumours, the little girls and women have tied white bands in their hair; the men wear ties and waistcoats.

We think of leprosy as a far-off tropical disease, certainly not a Canadian problem. But these lepers, some of the last inmates of the leper hospital in Tracadie, New Brunswick, were Canadian victims of one of history's most feared diseases.

In 1844, Francois Xavier Lafrance, a young priest newly arrived in the northeastern New Brunswick fishing community of Tracadie, reported a horrifying discovery. Some of his parishioners were disfigured by a "loathsome disease." Their faces were distorted with fleshy lumps and swellings; noses, hands, and feet were ulcerated and gangrenous, with bones showing through gaping wounds. Their breath was foul and voices husky as the disease



HISTORICAL MUSEUM OF TRACADIE



HISTORICAL MUSEUM OF TRACADIE

invaded their throats. Some were blind.

Responding immediately to the priest's urgent request, New Brunswick authorities dispatched a medical commission. In their report, the doctors confirmed Lafrance's suspicion: The villagers were suffering from leprosy, a slowly progressive, often-fatal, skin- and nerve-destroying disease — "identical with the tubercular leprosy which prevailed throughout Europe during the Middle Ages."

Older settlers helped the commissioners pinpoint the first case. Ursule Benoit, an Acadian woman, had showed signs of leprosy in 1817, dying of the illness in 1828. The commissioners heard the gruesome story that at Benoit's funeral the liquefying contents of her casket leaked onto the bruised shoulder of a pallbearer, who subsequently contracted leprosy and died. Since then, cases had been appearing in the region. In their 1844 report, the commissioners identified eighteen still-living victims.

Leprosy has been feared throughout history. In the Middle Ages, lepers were deemed "unclean." A still-living leper would be given a funeral mass, declared dead, and banished from the community.

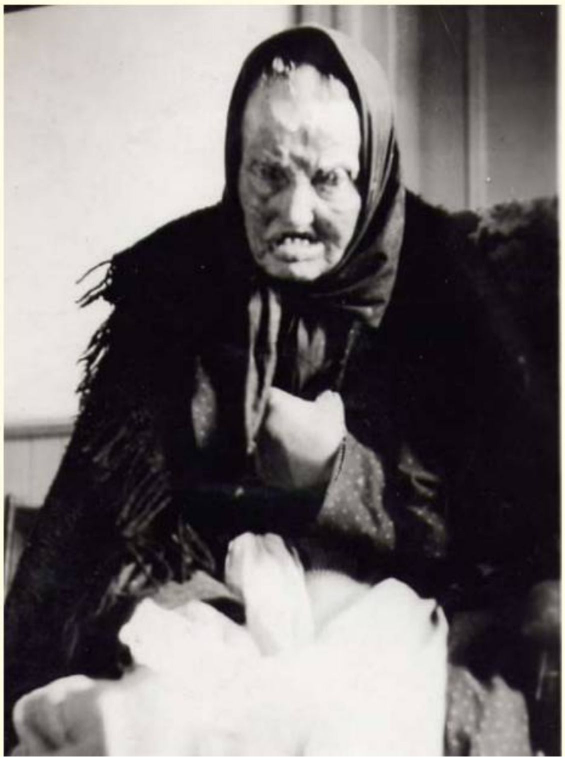
In keeping with this grim tradition, the commissioners ordered the afflicted men, women, and children — some as young as eight — rounded up and segregated in an old cholera quarantine station on Sheldrake Island, located at the mouth of the Miramichi River, approximately eighty kilometres from their homes. There, virtually abandoned, the lepers were to live out the remainders of their lives.

Sheldrake leper colony was no hospital sanatorium. The quarantine sheds were airless, dark, cold, and dirty. Medical care was non-existent. The less crippled were expected to care for the more mutilated.

Conditions rapidly deteriorated. One visiting doctor described the horror of the scene in 1849: "I never saw a spectacle more calculated to harrow the feelings of humanity. The stench was so intolerable from putrefaction that it required the greatest determination even to undertake … treatment."

The French-Canadian leper colony attracted much medical attention at a time when the quarantining of lepers had become highly controversial. A series of searing articles in the medical literature was critical of New Brunswick's handling of the situation.

"The crimeless sufferer has been condemned by the legislator of his country to perpetual imprisonment," wrote Canadian physician Dr. Robert Bayard in an article



HISTORICAL MUSEUM OF TRACADIE

Top: A group of lepers at the Tracadie lazaretto, 1868. Middle: The first resident pastor of Tracadie, François Xavier Lafrance. Right: A woman with leprosy in Tracadie, 1922.

in *The Lancet*.

Doctors such as Bayard thought quarantine was unnecessary because the disease was too rare to be transmissible. Leprosy had existed for twenty-eight years amongst the 22,000 residents of two New Brunswick counties, yet only forty cases had ever occurred. And close contact between diseased and healthy people was common. Babies were often nursed by "leprous mothers" and lepers slept with healthy spouses.

For instance, a man named Fabien Gotreau was described as having been diseased for three years, with tubercles on his genitals. Yet he cohabited with his wife, who remained well, as did their seven children.

An article by Dr. Alexander Boyle in the *London Medical Gazette* in 1844 pointed out that New Brunswick was far behind the times for its practice of isolating people in leper colonies.

"[For Europe], greater experience has banished all dread of its supposed contagion, and opened their noble hospitals to the admission of lepers, without distinction, among other patients," wrote Boyle.

Boyle and others argued that leprosy was hereditary. They produced genealogies linking the New Brunswick cases to Ursule Benoit's family. They believed hereditary predisposition, combined with poverty, poor sanitation, and bad food, in particular "putrid fish," could activate latent disease.

Others disagreed. Dr. Alexander Key, who had led the 1844 New Brunswick medical commission, was convinced leprosy was transmissible and that lepers should be incarcerated.

As we know today, both views are partly correct. Leprosy, or Hansen's disease, is indeed caused by an infectious organism, *Mycobacterium leprae*. But as the Canadian medical writers so clearly documented in their studies, leprosy is difficult to transmit. Most populations are extremely resistant, and the risk to others is small. Only about one percent of those exposed will ever develop full-blown leprosy.

Unhappily for the Acadians of the nineteenth century, the New Brunswick government was under intense public pressure to confine the lepers. General apprehension drowned the more moderate medical voices. The unfortunate leprosy victims were left to decay in their medieval-style lazaretto.

Conditions for the New Brunswick lepers slowly improved as the century wore on. A new institution was built in Tracadie in the 1850s. Dr. James Nicholson became the lazaretto's first resident doctor in 1863. And in 1868, seven Montreal Sisters of St. Joseph — including pharmacist St. Jean de Goto — arrived in the colony. The sisters' compassion, nursing care, and attention did much to alleviate the suffering of the imprisoned residents.

The source of leprosy in New Brunswick remains a mystery. Some historians believe the organism may have been carried by Acadian exiles returning from Louisiana, yet another tragic by-product of the expulsions from Acadia that began in 1755. Alternatively, it may have originated in Normandy.

However the disease arrived, it took a hundred years before leprosy burnt out in the population. The last Acadian patients were admitted to the leprosarium in 1937; the facility closed in 1965.

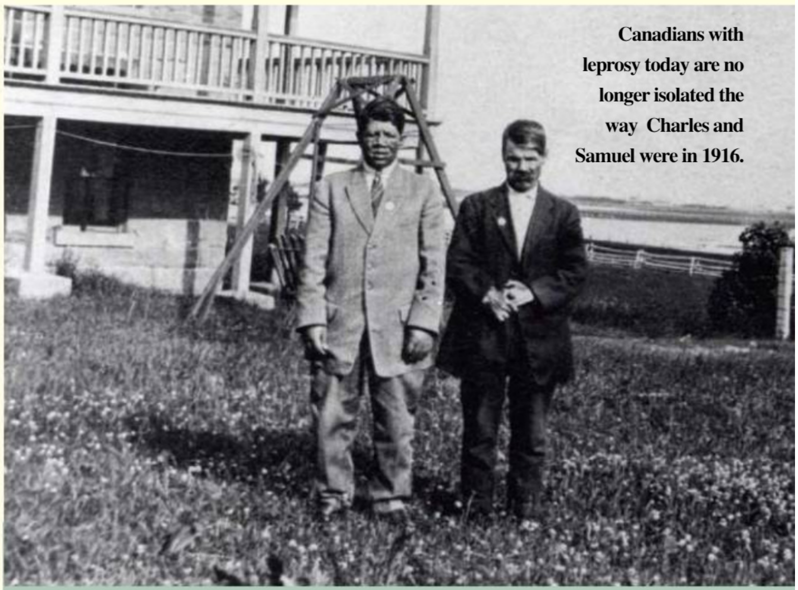
Isolde Prince is a Toronto-based freelance writer.

Et Cetera

Children of Lazarus: the Story of the Lazaretto at Tracadie by M.J. Losier and C. Pinet. Fiddlehead Books, Fredericton, New Brunswick, 1984.

Don't Fence Me In: Leprosy in Modern Times by Tony Gould. Bloomsbury Publishing, London, 2005.

To view more photographs of the lepers of Tracadie, go to: TheBeaver.ca



Canadians with leprosy today are no longer isolated the way Charles and Samuel were in 1916.

HISTORICAL MUSEUM OF TRACADIE

Leprosy today

There may be more cases of leprosy in Canada today than were incarcerated at any one time in Tracadie's leprosarium. In the nineteenth century, the facility held only thirty to forty inmates at a time. But between 1979 and 2002, in Ontario alone, 184 cases of leprosy were reported, mainly from countries where the disease remains entrenched, such as India, the Philippines, and Vietnam.

Leprosy is still an infectious, transmissible disease. It is curable, but curing people is difficult. The patient must take several powerful drugs for a long period of time. Yet leprosy goes largely unnoticed in Canada.

One important reason we no longer fear this disease is because the frightening terms "leprosy" and "lepers" have been retired. Today the malady is renamed Hansen's disease after Armaur Hansen, a Norwegian who discovered the causative bacillus in 1873. The loss of the word has helped us lose the horror that once condemned so many to be isolated and abandoned.

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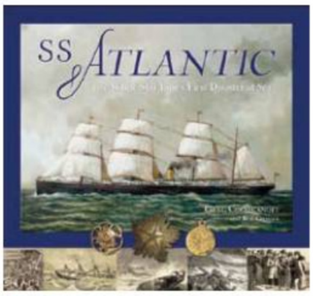

by Greg Cochkanoff and Bob Chaulk

It's a cold April night on the high seas. A ship steams quickly toward port. The lookouts think they see something ahead. Too late, they warn the bridge…. Built forty-two years before the RMS *Titanic*, the *Atlantic* had successfully completed eighteen crossings before it ran aground off the coast of Nova Scotia on April 1, 1873, killing 562 of the 952 on board. It was the worst transatlantic steamship disaster of the nineteenth century, yet, until now, the full story has never been told.

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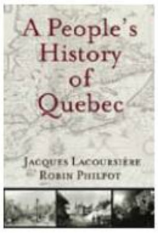

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A People's History of Quebec is a lively guide to a little-known part of North American history. It tells of the settlement of the St. Lawrence Valley, but also of the Montreal and Quebec-based explorers and traders who travelled, mapped, and inhabited most of North America, and befriended the peoples they met. Based on meticulous research, Jacques Lacoursière and Robin Philpot shed new light on Quebec's 450-year history.

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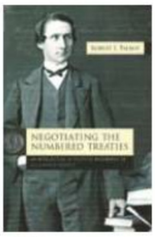

by Robert J. Talbot

Alexander Morris, the main negotiator of many of the numbered treaties on the prairies, has often been portrayed as a parsimonious agent of the government, bent on taking advantage of First Nations. Robert J. Talbot takes a different view. He sees Morris as sympathetic to the challenges faced by Canada's indigenous peoples as they sought to secure their future in the face of encroaching settlement and the disappearance of the buffalo.

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Essence of Indecision: Diefenbaker's Nuclear Policy, 1957–1963

Essence of Indecision

by Patricia I. McMahon

The nuclear issue was a minor political matter when John Diefenbaker became prime minister in 1957. By 1963, it served as a catalyst for his defeat, with many attributing his demise to the indecision with which he handled it. Patricia McMahon tells a more nuanced story in *Essence of Indecision*. Tracing Diefenbaker's deliberations over nuclear policy, McMahon shows that Diefenbaker was politically cautious, not indecisive.

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Maggie and the Chocolate War

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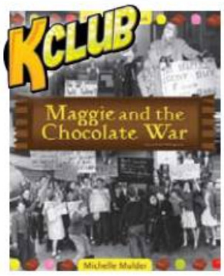


by Michelle Mulder

It's 1947. The war is over and Canadians no longer have to use ration tickets. But now food prices are skyrocketing, and when the announcement comes that the price of chocolate is going up, children take action. Based on true events, historical photographs and newspapers illustrate this fictional account of children uniting from coast to coast to stop the madness and keep their favourite treat affordable.

$12.00* *Save 24%*

Words of wisdom

Settlers' testimonials offer glimpse of early prairie life, says Dave Obee.

My grandfather's uncle, Fred Obee, had some simple advice for anyone thinking of settling on the Canadian prairies in the 1880s.

"Get into the country during the month of April if possible," he said, and bring plenty of "good warm clothing."

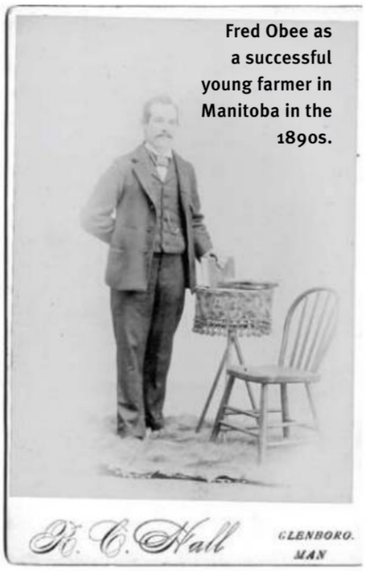
When it came to furnishing, Uncle Fred wasted no words.

"Do not load yourself down with a lot of useless goods such as house furnishings," he added. "Cash is easier carried over bad roads."

Fred's thoughts on the prairies are found in a questionnaire he filled out for the Canadian Pacific Railway's land department.

The survey was part of a promotional effort led by Alexander Begg, the CPR's immigration agent in London. Begg was a former journalist and Manitoba government employee. After moving to London for his new job in 1884, one of his first ideas was to send forms with forty-five questions to farmers throughout Manitoba. Around two hundred and fifty farmers sent them back, and Begg placed the best responses into publications extolling the virtues of life in the Canadian West.

Fred Obee's words appear in at least three of Begg's guides — *Manitoba, the Canadian North-West: Testimony of actual settlers,* from1884, as well as *Practical hints from farmers in the Canadian North-West* and *Plain facts from farmers in the Canadian North West* the follow-



Fred Obee as a successful young farmer in Manitoba in the 1890s.

R.C. HALL

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ing year.

These publications have been digitized and are available on the Peel's Prairie Provinces website, http://peel.library.ualberta.ca/index.html. Begg's raw material — the completed forms — ended up in the B.C. Archives in Victoria. They are available at the archives on microfilm.

The words of these early settlers provide a sense of the conditions faced by farmers at that time. They're of value to everyone doing family history research in Manitoba's rural areas in the late 1800s.

Fred Obee was from England, born near Maidstone, Kent, in 1854. He came to Canada with other family members in 1871, and arrived in Manitoba in May 1878 with $4.50.

In 1884, he reported that his farm on the south edge of Glenboro, Manitoba, was worth two thousand dollars, a remarkable achievement in just six years. Mixed farming — combining grain growing and raising livestock — was best, according to Fred.

Why? "You cannot farm without stock, as you must have manure."

In 1885, Begg sent another batch of forms to Manitoba settlers. Another of my relatives, John McKennit of Pendennis, in southwestern Manitoba, returned one of these forms.

McKennit — a first cousin, three times removed, to Canadian singer Loreena McKennitt — was included in *What settlers say of the Canadian North-West,* published in 1886. McKennit said he was "most assuredly" satisfied by the country, the climate, and the prospects ahead.

Begg, who died in Victoria in 1897, also sent questionnaires to women on farms and received about three hundred replies.

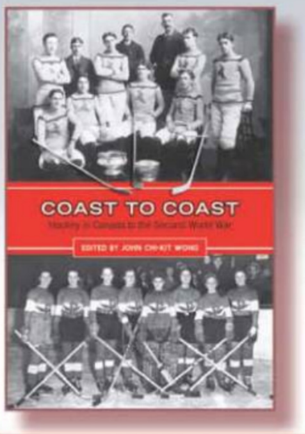
Sarah Jane Wheatland, who farmed with her husband Cornelius and their family in the Donore district of Manitoba, had her comments published in another CPR publication, *What women say of the Canadian North-West*, published in 1886.

She said her family had experienced hardships in the first year, but did not elaborate. She also cautioned young women against heading to the Prairies expecting to find work on a farm. It would be better, she said, to "get married to some good young fellow," and then settle down to life on a farm with him.

Wheatland warned that settlers needed to ask themselves if they could forego the comforts where they were, and if they could stand the isolation they would face. And she noted that things would be better for those who could buy an established farm in a settled area.

Fred Obee, John McKennit, and Sarah Jane Wheatland all lived on their Manitoba farms for many years after helping Begg with his promotional efforts. And, more than a century later, their words are helping us develop a better understanding of what life was like for the first farmers to break the land.

Dave Obee has been researching his family history on the prairies for thirty years and has written several books about genealogy.



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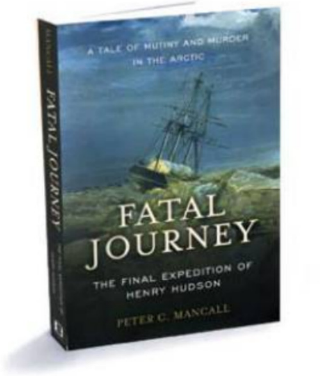

A TALE OF MUTINY AND MURDER IN THE ARCTIC
FATAL JOURNEY
THE FINAL EXPEDITION OF HENRY HUDSON
PETER C. MANCALL

AMBITION GROUNDED

Fatal Journey:
The Final Expedition of Henry Hudson
by Peter C. Mancall
Basic Books, New York, 2009
320 pp., illus., $33.95 hardcover

In the spring of 1611, after being stranded on the southern shore of James Bay during an unimaginably brutal winter, Henry Hudson's crew was sick, starving, demoralized, and desperate to return to England. But Hudson had other plans. It was the English explorer's fourth attempt to discover a northern route from Europe to the Orient and its highly coveted spice markets — a route that "remained the greatest prize any explorer could find." This time he was determined to take that prize.

When the ice finally released the *Discovery* from its crushing grip, Hudson prepared to press on. Fearful that they may end up spending another winter in the Arctic, a few of the men decided to take matters into their own hands. Hudson, his seventeen-year-old son John, and seven others were forcefully removed from the vessel and set adrift in a small shallop without food or weapons.

What befell Hudson and the others after the mutineers sailed off in the *Discovery* is a mystery that has intrigued scholars for centuries. In *Fatal Journey: The Final Expedition of Henry Hudson*, Peter C. Mancall, a professor of history and anthropology at the University of Southern California and an expert on the history of travel and discovery, draws on a variety of sources to recreate the events surrounding the mutiny and the disappearance of Hudson.

This fascinating tale of greed, ambition, adventure, betrayal, and murder is a significant part of our history, yet today it has been all but forgotten. Hudson's saga, Mancall says, reveals a great deal about "one of the darker chapters of the European age of discovery." It was a time when spices "had become not just a commodity but an obsession for people across England." This craving for spices spawned cartels such as the East India Company, which backed expeditions to sail in search of a northern route that would allow quick access to the spice markets of the East Indies.

By 1610, Henry Hudson was a highly skilled navigator whose previous voyages in search of a Northeast Passage had taught him a great deal about sailing in Arctic waters. But Hudson's final voyage seemed doomed from the start. By the time the *Discovery* ran aground on the rocky shore of James Bay that fall, tensions among the crew were running high.

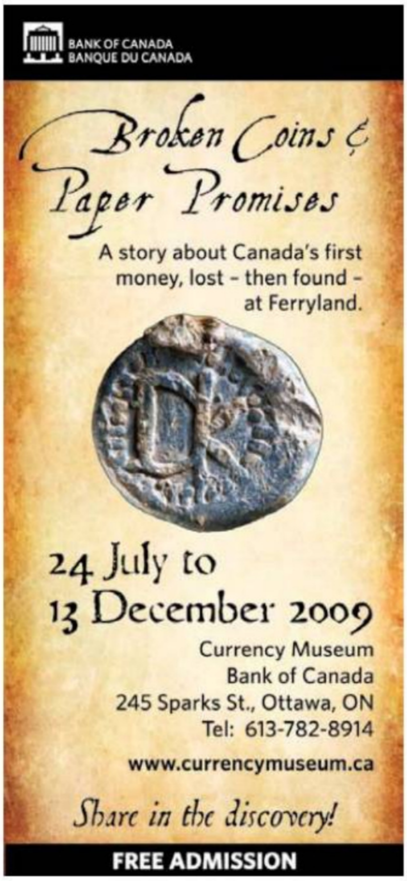
Mancall portrays Hudson as an ambitious but humane captain who frequently demonstrated concern for the well-being of his crew. However, he made some questionable decisions that raised doubts about his command, caused dissent among the crew, and ultimately sealed his fate.

After the mutineers sailed away in the *Discovery*, they encountered a group of Inuit and a scuffle broke out. Four of the sailors were mortally wounded and died shortly after returning to the ship. Conveniently, the survivors claimed it was the ringleaders of the insurrection who had died. Those who made it back to England were tried for the murder of Henry Hudson, but never convicted.

Mancall's beautifully written narrative evokes all the wonder and terror of venturing into what was, for Europeans, *terra incognita*. The explorers' harrowing encounters with icebergs, polar bears, and Inuit, as well as the misery and "horrors that extreme cold produced," are all vividly depicted. Mancall also paints a lucid picture of the characters and conflicts that gave rise to the mutiny.

What was Hudson's final fate? This, Mancall says, is a question that's easy to ask but difficult to answer. *Fatal Journey* nonetheless comes as close as is today possible to unravelling the mystery.

Reviewed by **Joyce Glasner**, a Halifax-based freelance writer and author. Her most recent book is *Pirates and Privateers*.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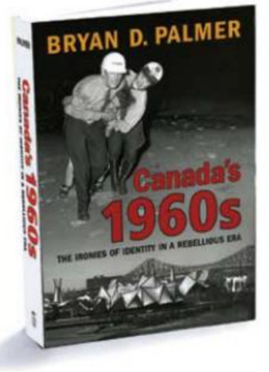


MAKE YOUR MARX

Canada's 1960s:
The Ironies of Identity in a Rebellious Era
by Bryan D. Palmer
University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 2009
605 pp., illus., $35 paperback

In recent years we've read accounts of how salt, the chronometer, the mathematical constant π, map-makers, and the Scots, among other people and things, all transformed the world.

It's a simple, but effective narrative device: Choose a subject familiar to all, shine the light of human endeavour through that prism, and admire an expansive and colourful result. What's not to like? For the sake of a good read, we're prepared to overlook the near certainty that the author has overstated the case. If your narrative tool is a hammer, then the history of the world becomes a progression of nails.

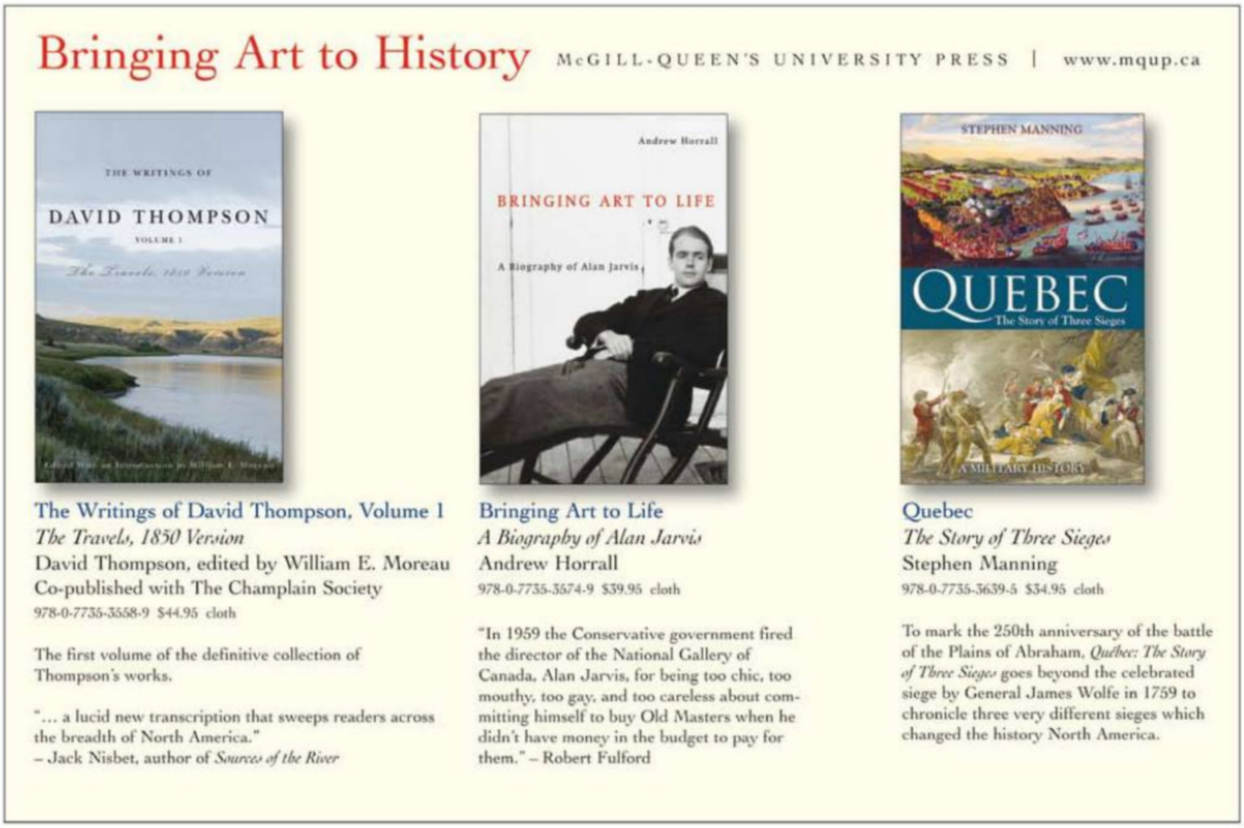
Accounts of a single period fall prey to a similar tendency. Inevitably the world is a far, far different place in the aftermath of the chosen era. Why else write the book?

And yet ... maybe it's no more than a twinge in my aging boomer bones, but the 1960s still feel different from other decades. So I picked up Bryan D. Palmer's *Canada's 1960s* in hope of revisiting my youth and in fear of an overstated account of the decade's significance.

My first surprise came in the prologue. Palmer is fond of Marxist analysis. Nothing about *this* in the fulsome press releases issued by University of Toronto Press and by Trent University, where Palmer is a Canada Research Chair. Hmm.

My second surprise also came in the prologue to what is billed as a "highly accessible" work: "This historicized, Marxist sense of irony is thus classically double-visioned, as is all irony: it is critically poised to appreciate the salience of disjuncture and crisis in the social order." Maybe they mean highly accessible to graduate students.

Fortunately, things then pick up. Chapters on the economy, the Cold War, the Munsinger affair, and the Ali-Chuvalo fight of 1966 all deliver strong storylines, dramatic tension, and plenty of fascinating detail. Gerda Munsinger emerges, unexpectedly to me, as a somewhat sympathetic figure. And, heresy of heresies, it is revealed that the Avro Arrow may have been terminated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Quebec
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To mark the 250th anniversary of the battle of the Plains of Abraham, *Québec: The Story of Three Sieges* goes beyond the celebrated siege by General James Wolfe in 1759 to chronicle three very different sieges which changed the history North America.

for very good reason. Swept along by the narrative, you even start to buy in to the inevitable never-the-same-afterwards analysis.

The gist of Palmer's thesis is that the 1960s (a) put paid to old notions of Canada as a compliant, white, patriarchal, British dominion, but (b) in a Marxist irony, provided no new sustaining identity. Hence the book's subtitle: *The Ironies of Identity in a Rebellious Era.*

That the Canada of yore had faded away strikes me as unarguable, although Palmer's attribution of the demise to the 1960s as opposed to some other decade seems a matter of convenience.

The motivation for the second part of his thesis becomes clearer in the last half or more of the book, where Palmer dissects the protest and dissent that characterized the 1960s. Readers will find these chapters a hard slog, unless they have a profound interest in the details of who said or did what to whom in 1960-something on behalf of, or in opposition to, RIN, CBRT, SUPA, CTCC, NARP, and a host of similar organizations.

Palmer's preoccupation with class conflict surely explains his personal and profound interest in these organizations, their activities, and their unfinished business — i.e., the creation of a new Canadian order.

But try telling habitués of Timmy's that we have no Canadian identity — if you can get a word in edgewise as they ponder hockey's salary cap, their planned winter getaways, the ridiculous U.S. health care system, and the venality of politicians (both a federal and a provincial matter). They know that "Sudbury Saturday Night," Bob & Doug McKenzie, and the Joe Canadian rant are, and always have been, incomprehensible anywhere else in the world. Rightly or wrongly, they believe the world needs more Canada and less Marxist analysis.

Reviewed by **Paul Jones**, a retired publisher, a family historian, and a director of Canada's National History Society.

More Books

Strange Fatality:
The Battle of Stoney Creek, 1813
by James E. Elliott
Robin Brass Studios, Montreal, 2009
320 pp., illus., $24.95 paperback

Niagara 1814: The Final Invasion
by Jon Latimer
Osprey Publishing, Oxford, U.K., 2009
96 pp., illus., $22.95 paperback

In *Strange Fatality: The Battle of Stoney Creek, 1813,* James Elliott explains how a "chaotic, night action hardly an hour in duration" changed the course of the War of 1812. Reeling from an earlier defeat, the British mounted a desperate counterattack against a much larger American army east of present-day Hamilton. As the author graphically describes, the raid quickly degenerated into blind confusion on both sides. The American forces, taken by surprise, retreated to the Niagara River in shock.

Elliott does an excellent job of placing the brief skirmish in the context of the war and explores how a combination of bungling American leadership and pure luck prevented the United States Army from capturing the most populated and fertile region of Upper Canada.

Though many of the episodes and details will be familiar to students of the war, Elliott's retelling moves along at a brisk and engaging pace, making for a very fluid read. Entertaining vignettes and pithy historical quotations liven up the narrative, as do the scores of portraits, photographs, and maps that fill the book's pages. With helpful appendices, a bibliography, and plenty of careful citations, *Strange Fatality* will be enjoyable for casual readers of military history and useful to scholars.

The events of the war's last American offensive the following summer are succinctly retold by John Latimer in *Niagara 1814: The Final Invasion.*

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Vividly illustrated by Graham Turner, *Niagara 1814* compares the leadership, forces, and planning of the opposing sides and provides a blow-by-blow account of the action that ensued.

Detailed maps and artist's renderings bring to life the savage fighting that took place at Chippewa, Lundy's Lane, and elsewhere. *Niagara 1814* would be an excellent companion for a battlefield tour and offers a solid starting reference to some of the bloodiest fighting ever to occur on Canadian soil. **— Tim Compeau**

Extraordinary Canadians:
Pierre Elliott Trudeau
by Nino Ricci
Penguin Canada, Toronto, 2009
207 pp., $26 hardcover

Nino Ricci's Trudeau biography stands out because it is one of the first to be written by someone from the generation after Trudeau. Ricci admits that he argued to author this biography because he wanted to unpack the man from the icon he grew up with. And it's a good thing he prevailed.

The narrative is thoroughly researched. While Ricci presents few stories, details, or theories about Trudeau's legacy that haven't been told elsewhere, he provides a surprisingly comprehensive biography in perhaps the shortest number of pages ever devoted to a Trudeau book.

Ricci's signature style is evident, and his own insights peppered throughout the text are enjoyable. Personal, human, and generous, Ricci attempts to make us believe that underlying all the complexities and contradictions of Trudeau's character, deep down he was a more modest, reserved, and cautious character than the legend we've created — that he was really more like us.

But Ricci can't quite close that case. That would mean accepting that Trudeau was not larger than life. Ricci doesn't really believe that — or want to — so he fails in the ultimate challenge of separating the man from the myth. Yet that doesn't detract one bit from this very readable recollection of a man whose long shadow is cast across so much of present-day Canadian life. **— D.M.**

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Newfoundland and Labrador:
A History
by Sean T. Cadigan
University of Toronto Press,
Toronto, 2009
384 pp., illus., $29.95 paperback

Prince Edward Island:
An Illustrated History
by Douglas Baldwin
Nimbus Publishing, Halifax, 2009
240 pp., illus., $22.95 paperback

Just as the two island provinces on Canada's East Coast are worlds apart in climate, geography, history, and heritage, two recent books offer very different approaches to their respective histories.

Newfoundland and Labrador: A History is a scholarly work, a linear telling of the province's beginnings that centres on its ecological reality. Newfoundland and Labrador's forbidding geography and climate mean that its fabulous riches are found more offshore than on — from its fishery to the oil and gas locked beneath the Grand Banks. Efforts to wring something out of the rocky land itself have been less fruitful.

Sean T. Cadigan, an associate history professor at Memorial University, pays particular attention to the way the environment has shaped the history and culture of Canada's newest province.

Prince Edward Island: An Illustrated History has a more popular, easy-to-read feel. Few pages are without an illustration or chart of some kind. These might be distracting to readers who prefer a less cluttered read, but they will please those who are prone to flipping through books and skimming for highlights.

It was jarring to have a fictional character — Anne Shirley of *Anne of Green Gables* — quoted in author Douglas Baldwin's introduction; but the rest of the book stays clear of references to this international "celebrity," except for a page and a half devoted to author Lucy Maud Montgomery.

Both books are informative. Cadigan's *Newfoundland* is heavier going but will reward those who want plenty of detail. Baldwin's *Prince Edward Island* requires less of an investment of time and effort. **— N.O.**

The Great Maritime Detective: The Exploits and Adventures of the Notorious Peachie Carroll
by Monica Graham
Nimbus Publishing, Halifax, 2009
232 pp., $17.95 paperback

Peter Owen Carroll, better known as "Peachie," wore many hats. Born in Pictou, Nova Scotia, he was a bounty hunter, prospector, railway guard, sailor, and the list goes on and on. But his longest-running career was as a police detective.

His shady methods and ambitious ways saw him in and out of the job many times. But there can be no doubt from the facts presented in *The Great Maritime Detective* that Carroll was a "great detective." Without the scientific methods available today, he sleuthed some of the toughest crimes of the late nineteenth century, including the New Brunswick murders of Eliza Dutcher and her son, and of police officer Joseph Steadman.

And Peachie was a character. A flamboyant self-promoter, his persona could certainly rival Inspector Poirot or Sherlock Holmes.

Author Monica Graham's narrative begins a bit dry. But getting past the opening pages is worth the journey, as her book becomes a fun, entertaining read. **— B.T.**

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Getaway

Mer Bleue Bog is a beautiful yet fragile ecosystem located just ten kilometres from Parliament Hill.

Ottawa's blue sea bog

Susan Hallett visits a remnant of the last glacial period in the heart of the National Capital Region.

It's known as the "hidden jewel" of Ottawa's greenbelt. Walking through the forested area of Mer Bleue, it's easy to see why.

The Mer Bleue (Blue Sea) Bog, a boreal peatland just ten kilometres southeast of Parliament Hill, has a very fragile ecosystem. About 12,000 years ago it was covered by the waters of the Champlain Sea and not by the thickly treed area we see today.

The spongy green moss and contrasting desert-like dunes, along with delicate wildflowers scattered throughout the region, make for a visual delight. As I walk along the path, I breathe in the scent of the forest — a perfume far better than any found in a bottle.

But people have not always seen its value.

"In the 1960s, there was actually a proposal to use the 'swamp' as a regional dump," says Dan Brunton of the Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club. The club, which was founded in 1879 and is Canada's oldest organization of its kind, was pivotal in saving the bog.

The bog has a varied history.

In the late 1800s, early settlers attempted to convert the bog to farmland by lighting fires to dry out the peat. They tried to drain it by digging ditches, but with no success.

During the Great Depression, people harvested some of its peat for fuel.

In 1942, Canada's Department of National Defence expropriated the bog to use as a practice bombing range for the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan flight school. It seemed a perfect spot because the bog is made up of sand ridges — formed as a sort of sand delta when the sand and silt-laden emergent Ottawa

A wooden boardwalk offers visitors easy access to Mer Bleue Bog's wetlands.

©NCC/CCN

River emptied into the sea — as well as marshes and the peat bog itself.

The DND's ownership of the bog actually helped preserve it in a more or less natural condition. Today, almost all of the Mer Bleue wetland is owned by the National Capital Commission, which has a defined management area within the site.

Michelle Comeau, vice-president of the Environment, Capital Lands, and Parks Branch of the NCC, says the approximately 2,800 hectares of Mer Bleue "is perhaps the most important natural area in the region."

In 1995, Mer Bleue was designated Canada's thirty-third Ramsar site — a distinction named after the Iranian city where an international wetland conservation treaty was signed. Thirty-six other wetlands in Canada are among 1,600 around the world that share this honour. Within Ontario, the Mer Bleue Bog is recognized as a Class I provincial wetland and an area of natural and scientific interest.

DANIEL MARCHAND

A year at the bog begins in dark midwinter, a season of ice and solitude. Midwinter is followed by a time of increasing light when a carpet of dazzling white snow covers the tundra-like vegetation. Cross-country skiers and snowshoers use the area, and moose, snowshoe hare, mink, beaver, muskrat, and the critically imperilled Henslow's sparrow make it their home.

Spring comes late to Mer Bleue — later than to the surrounding region. Ice penetrates deeply and stays until the end of May. I visited the bog in June, when flora and fauna not usually found this far south may be seen.

Sphagnum moss formed this bog's peat. The first step in coal formation, it is six metres deep in some areas. Creeping out from the edge, it gradually made a thick carpet over the basin's stagnant waters. The NCC fines those who step off the boardwalk and onto the peat, for once you leave your footprint in the peat it stays for generations.

Summertime in late June means mosquitoes as well as flowers at the bog, so we slathered on repellent, put on rubber boots, and started off along the boardwalk. NCC research papers show that 122 plants flourishing in the bog are considered regionally significant — meaning rare or sparse — in the Ottawa/Carleton district.

A moose stands in tall grass in a clearing at the Mer Bleue bog.

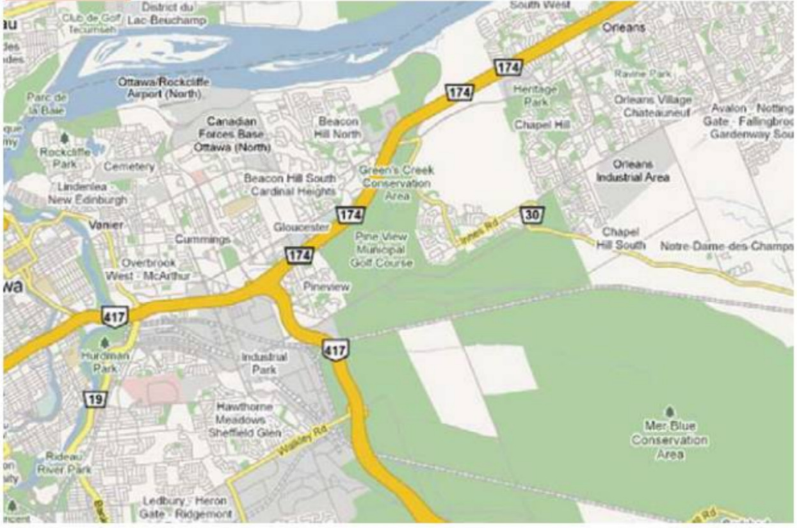
DANIEL MARCHAND

Open heath vegetation, dwarf shrubs, and black spruce forest mingle with Arctic cotton grass and bog rosemary. I was searching for orchids, but soon found there were Labrador tea, small cranberry, bog laurel, and blueberry bushes. Large purple-fringed orchids are rare, but eight other orchid species thrive at Mer Bleue, mainly in isolated spots. It was easy, however, to spot sheep-laurel, downy goldenrod, and March dandelions.

I find it hard to leave this delicate green landscape with its hidden gems. Looking ahead, I think of how it important it is that we take the time to preserve and celebrate this unique historic eco-treasure for our children and grandchildren.

Susan Hallett is a member of the North American Travel Journalists Association.

IF YOU GO...



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From Ottawa, take Highway 417 to Anderson Road. Go North on Anderson Road to Ridge Road. Turn right, go to the end of the road (approximately three kilometres) to the parking lot. Follow the path to the 1.2-kilometre marked bog trail.

Tip: Bring rubber boots and mosquito repellent in summer; a parka and skis in winter.

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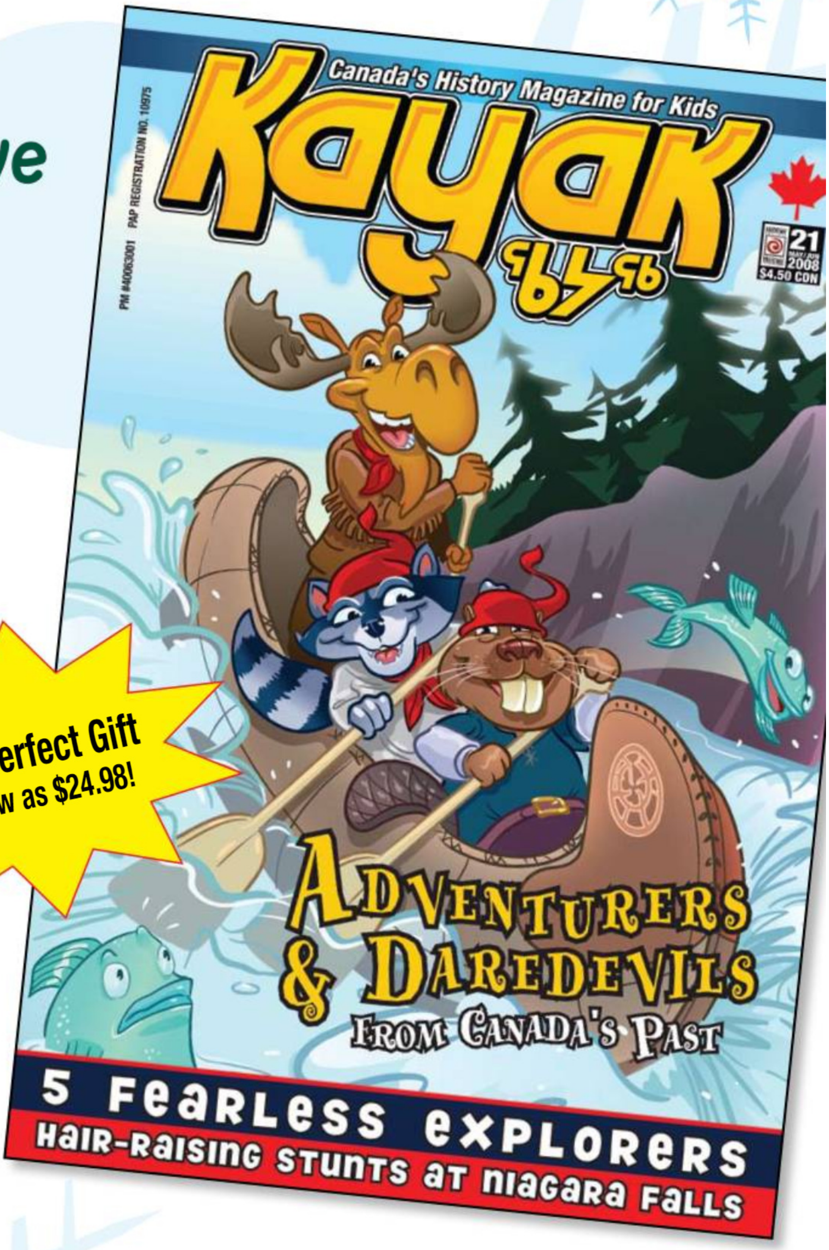
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Deborah Morrison

Partners in time

Canada's historic sites could use a helping hand from the tourism sector.

This summer, CBC Radio's *The Current* asked me about a controversy at Upper Canada Village — a heritage park in Eastern Ontario under new management by a former director of Canada's Wonderland.

Local groups were nervous that efforts to revitalize the park might undermine its "authenticity." So I drove there on Canada Day to see for myself.

Sadly, the parking lot was only one-third full — on a brilliantly sunny holiday! Tourists wandered, and period-costumed interpreters provided commentary as they strolled — but it seemed it could be so much more.

Morrisburg, the town nearest Upper Canada Village, is beautiful, and there are many other interesting destinations nearby. Yet the park seems disconnected from the region. It reminded me of an unfortunate comment someone else made on *The Current* — that "people didn't come to Upper Canada Village to have fun, they come to be educated."

As one of the twelve percent of Canadians who visit historic sites annually, I'd never before considered how these spaces present themselves to those who just want a vacation experience.

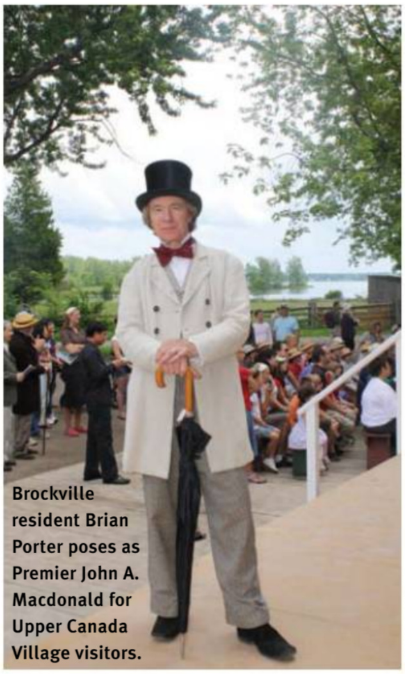
Tourism and conservation will always be a delicate balance, but investment in conservation is likely to increase only if Canadians value and visit historic sites.

Consider Prince of Wales Fort, located some 1,450 kilometres northeast of Winnipeg. With no roads into the nearby town of Churchill, Manitoba, it is a challenge to get there. Yet, the fort itself is fantastic, bringing the story of Canada's fur trade to life in ways even I hadn't imagined.

Unfortunately, few Canadians have ever seen it. Even from Churchill, an ecotourism destination that attracts visitors from around the world, it's hard to get to. The fort is accessible only by boat — and Parks Canada doesn't own a vessel to ferry passengers across.

Churchill's local tour guides — knowledgeable and fiercely proud of the region's historic sites — operate a fleet of boats. These could be used to take visitors to the fort, but discussions that would see this happen came to an impasse. The parties couldn't agree on who will pay, who will profit, and how to protect the site while improving the visitor experience.

And so it sits, lacking visitors and virtually inaccessible. It seems to me that with better collaboration between Parks Canada and local guides, the fort could become as popular as the region's polar bears, belugas, and birds.


Brockville resident Brian Porter poses as Premier John A. Macdonald for Upper Canada Village visitors.

THOMAS MORRISON

Even "the crown jewel of the Canadian Parks Service" — Nova Scotia's Fortress of Louisbourg — could use a little help from commercial tourism.

Located on Cape Breton Island, the fortress is a reconstruction of the original seventeenth-century French fortified settlement. Canadian historian Margaret Conrad, who helped research Louisbourg during the 1960s, calls it one of the best-interpreted historic sites in the world.

"The site itself is full of activities for kids and adults," she said. "[There are] well-trained staff who stay in character, a couple of period restaurants, gardens, shops, … films, and workshops that focus on such skills as eighteenth-century cooking."

Visitors can also enjoy a host of other tourist attractions in the region, ranging from hiking and whale-watching to spa treatments at world-class resorts. Trouble is, you'd never know that by looking at the Fortress of Louisbourg's website.

Compared to the official website for Virginia's Colonial Williamsburg — a dynamic, engaging site that links to many private tourist attractions nearby — Louisbourg's looks like, well, the government website that it is. What a difference an integrated tourism strategy makes!

Canadian historic sites are renowned for being "more genuine" than some comparable American sites, and I would never suggest anything that might take away from this reputation. However, there's a real benefit to marketing history and making it a part of a fun family vacation!

This year, Parks Canada launched its "Real. Inspiring." marketing campaign. It's a compelling first step toward better domestic marketing. But the real challenge is to deliver on the campaign's promise. One way to do that is to reach out to the private sector. As I see it, it's the best way of getting citizens and communities more invested in the future value of the historic spaces that surround them.

Deborah Morrison is the president and CEO of Canada's National History Society, and publisher of *The Beaver*.

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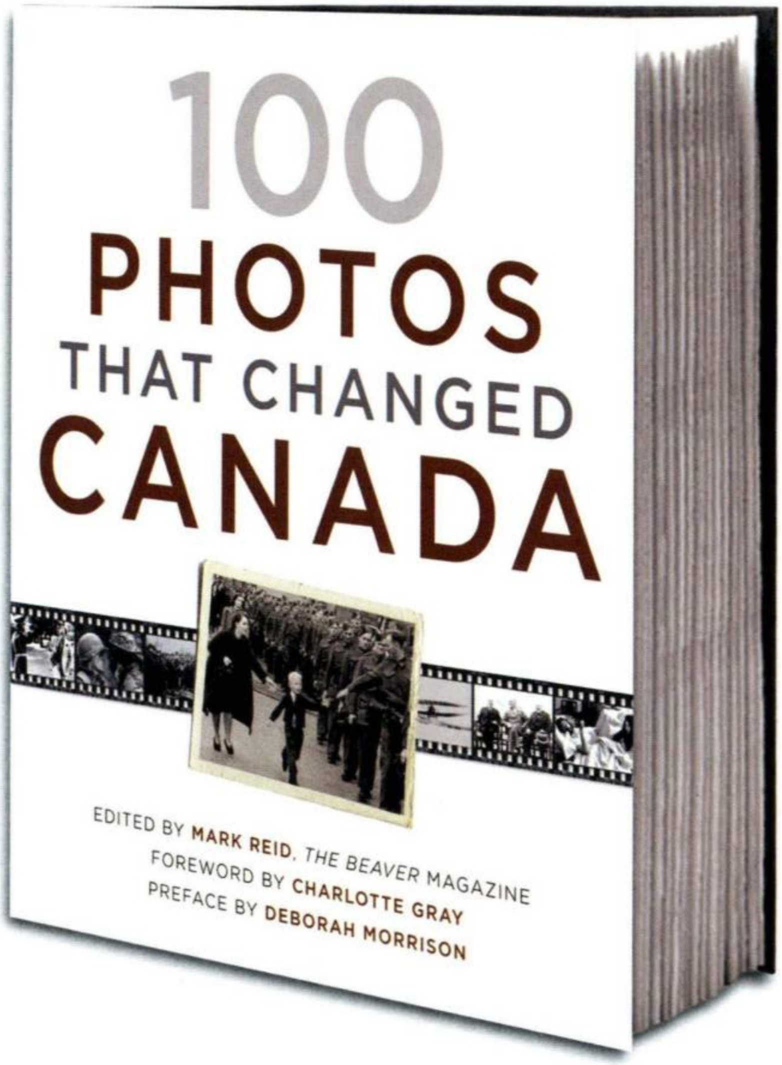
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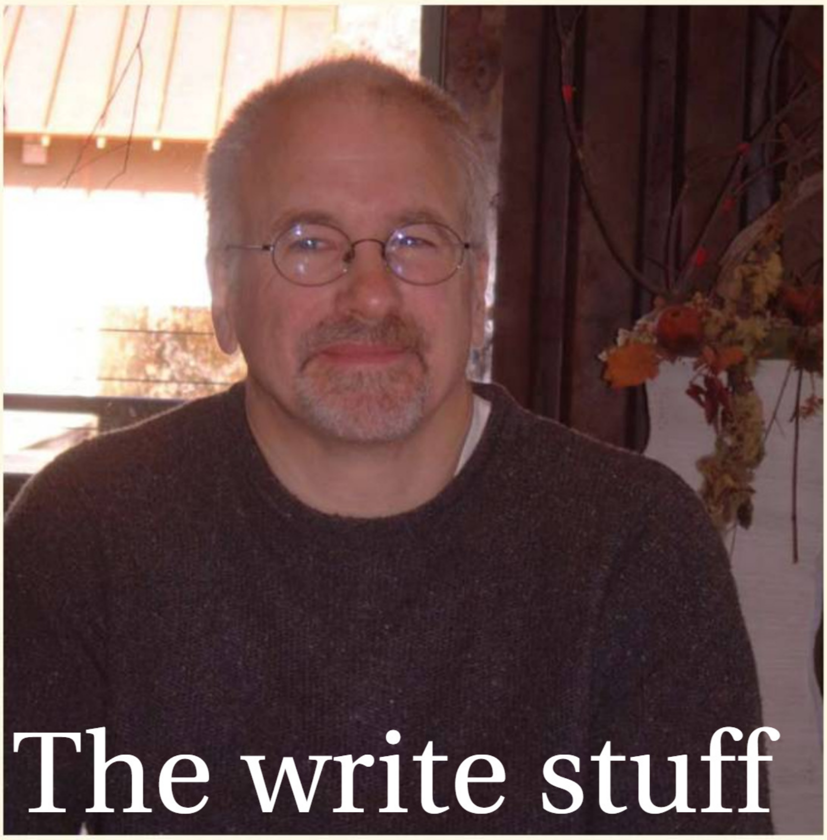
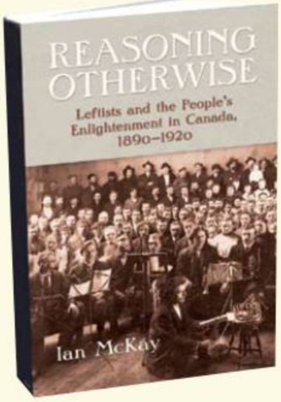


The write stuff

Queen's University professor awarded CHA's prestigious Sir John A. Macdonald Prize.


REASONING OTHERWISE
Leftists and the People's Enlightenment in Canada, 1890–1920
Ian McKay

Prof. Ian McKay's new book, *Reasoning Otherwise: Leftists and the People's Enlightenment in Canada, 1890–1920,* is an absorbing and in-depth look at the history of the early leftist movement in Canada.

The book, the 2009 winner of the Canadian Historical Association's Sir John A. Macdonald Prize, focuses on the social, economic, cultural, and intellectual context of the emergence of leftists while providing a "sympathetic, but always critical eye" on the movement and its key figures. McKay will receive his prize during the newly expanded Canada's History Awards in Ottawa in November.

Beaver Editor Mark Reid caught up with McKay in late summer and spoke with him about his award and his research.

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Founded in 1994 to popularize Canadian history, the work of Canada's National History Society includes:
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the **Governor General's Awards for Excellence in Teaching Canadian History** to honour the country's best history teachers, and the **Pierre Berton Award** to recognize those who have brought history to a wider audience.

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The Beaver was founded in 1920 by the Hudson's Bay Company, whose commitment to the History Society and its programs continues today through the ***Hudson's Bay Company History Foundation.***

History awards go big

The newly expanded Canada's History Awards are set to take place this November at Rideau Hall in Ottawa. The Governor General's Awards for Excellence in Teaching Canadian History are handed out each year to six of the country's best schoolteachers, and for the first time they will be accompanied by a roster of other honours.

"Inspired by the students they teach and the broader community involved in history education, we expanded the awards to bring greater attention to achievements across the history field," said Deborah Morrison, president of Canada's National History Society, which organizes the awards for teachers.

The History Society will at the same time hand out its annual Pierre Berton Award in recognition of those who bring Canadian history to a wider audience.

Meanwhile, the scholarly Canadian Historical Association will present its Sir John A. Macdonald Prize for the best book on Canadian history to Professor Ian McKay of Queen's University; the B.C.-based Begbie Contest for public school students will announce its winners; and the Historica-Dominion Institute will award the winner of its Great Questions student essay contest.

In future years, Morrison envisions working with public history organizations to recognize efforts in the broader community. Visit HistorySociety.ca to find out who wins. — Phil Koch

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Q. *What went through your mind when you learned that you had won the Sir John A. Macdonald prize?*

A. I was quite surprised. I was so immersed in research that I hadn't noticed it had been shortlisted. Naturally, I was also delighted — it's wonderful to work so long and hard on a book and learn that it has connected with people. I'm also very pleased that a book about the left from a Marxist perspective would be so well received.

Q. *What originally attracted you to studying leftists?*

A. My parents undoubtedly shaped my interest in social justice and fairness — my mother, Margaret McKay, was a quiet but stubborn supporter of progressive causes, especially those related to women.

I grew up in Cornwall, Ontario, and Sarnia, Ontario. I remember vividly the debates in the 1960s over Dow Chemical — then very big in Sarnia — and that company's production of napalm, used with deadly effect on the children of Vietnam. Then I spent almost two decades in the Maritimes, where I got involved in a publication called *New Maritimes* and did a Ph.D. thesis on the province's coal miners, who educated me profoundly in labour history.

Q. *Some people might say that a leftist is a leftist is a leftist. Is this accurate?*

A. A leftist holds that any society founded on large-scale private ownership and market relationships entails injustice; that a more equitable and worthwhile form of society can be established, that attaining such a society will entail a political and social revolution; and that the possibilities for a new social order actually exist today as possible outcomes of actually existing trends in the social and economic world.

You will find that in every age leftists tend to centre on particular core issues and then build movements around them. A leftist of 1900 and a leftist of 2000 would share some concepts, but not others.

Q. *How has the leftist movement changed over the past century in Canada?*

A. *Reasoning Otherwise* looks at leftists in Canada from 1890 to 1920, when pretty well every thinker on the left was preoccupied with scientific explanations of natural and social evolution (associated with Darwin and Spencer) and interested in relating these ideas with those of socialists like Marx and Engels.

On a whole series of issues — class, religion, the “woman question,” race — such socialists approached the world around them with very long-range, you might even say “cosmic,” perspectives. For them, socialism was more about educating the people — spreading the “people’s enlightenment” — than it was about winning seats in the House of Commons.

Yet ... it is possible to see parallels between these adventures in thought and activism and our own struggle to build eco-socialist movements. In both their age and ours, much socialist writing suggests that humanity is a species whose physical survival requires a collective struggle to overcome capitalism.

Q. *The CHA says your book “gives a depth to left thinking and action that it sadly lacked in existing literature on the period.” Why do you think that the existing literature is so lacking on this subject?*
A. It would be too easy for a Marxist like me just to blame the anti-left liberal consensus among Canadian historians — tempting and in some ways justifiable as that option is.

But, I think left historians themselves bear a huge share of the responsibility for the scantiness of the field. As each new cohort of the left takes shape, it often does so through a “slaughter of the ancestors,” i.e., by declaring null and void all the insights and struggles of past leftists operating on the same terrain. This has short-term political advantages — it allows each generation to proclaim itself the “true version,” the authentic article.

I’d like to change these habits of patronage and dismissal. A much richer and more respectful literature will make a huge contribution to a more effective contemporary leftism.

To listen to the full interview with Ian McKay, go to: TheBeaver.ca

Coming in *The Beaver* December • January

Hockey’s Red Dawn
Years of Olympic gold convinced Canadians that hockey was “our game.” Were we wrong.
BY LAWRENCE MARTIN

Ice Queen in Hot Seat
In an Olympic era purer than today, the gift of a new car gave figure-skating champion Barbara Ann Scott no end of grief.
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Thanks to the Crazy Canucks, alpine skiing in Canada went from niche sport to a headline grabber.
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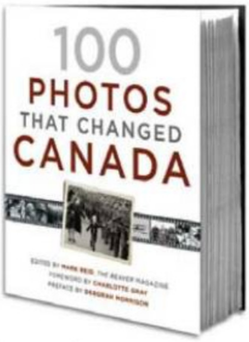

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Join Don Newman, former host of CBC Newsworld’s *Politics*, Deborah Morrison, President of Canada’s National History Society, and Mark Reid, editor of *The Beaver*, as well as various contributors and photographers from across the country.

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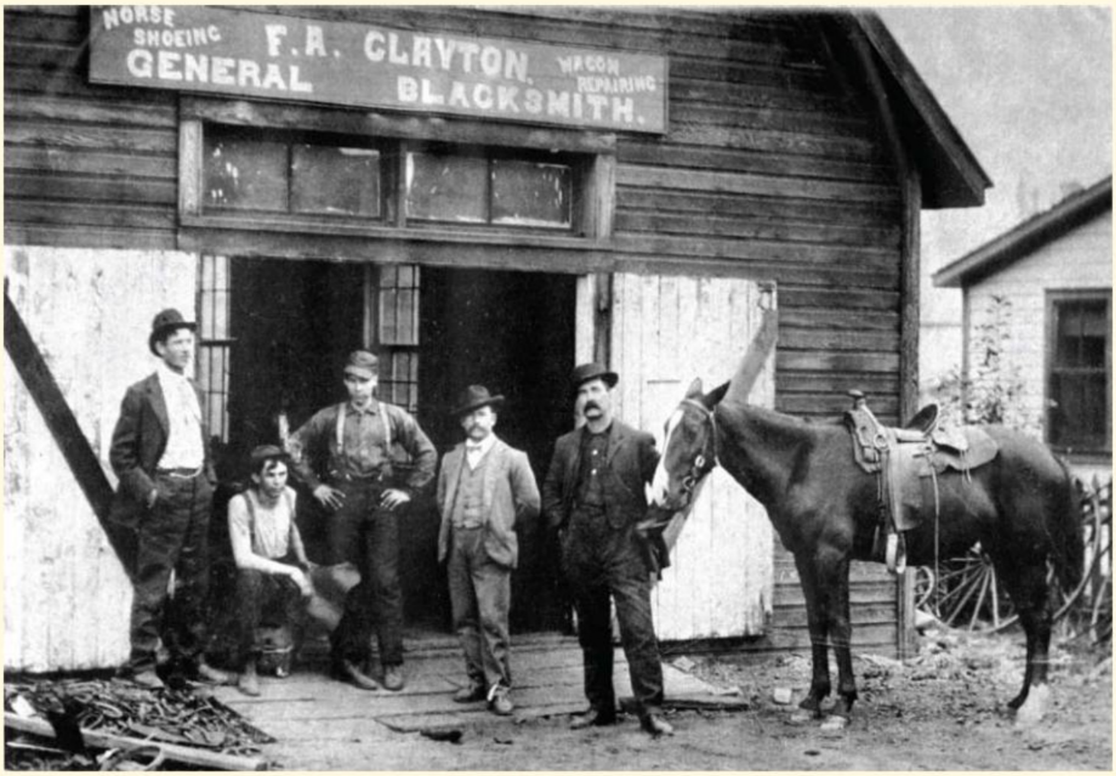
Album

Maxime Jones is the eldest granddaughter of Frank and Maud Clayton. She lives in Ottawa.



Bent to shape

F.A. Clayton General Blacksmith performed an essential service in the days when horses and wagons were the common form of conveyance. Frank Albert Clayton ran his blacksmith business in Armstrong, British Columbia.

The shop had several stalls in the back for the horses to cool down in before they had their shoes replaced. In the centre of the large room stood a huge brick forge with a massive chimney rising up to the wooden roof. Coal was burned until red-hot, pumped with air by manually operated bellows. New or used pieces of metal were heated to a brilliant glow in the fire, removed with long tools, and then placed on an anvil. There, Frank hammered the metal into the desired shapes — a shoe to fit the horse's foot, a rim for a wagon wheel, a runner for a horse-drawn sleigh or a child's toboggan.

As his granddaughter Maxime Jones recalls, "whatever people desired to be made from metal were shaped by the use of the anvil and hammer and grandfather's muscles." The shop was big enough to bring wagons inside, close to the work area. In this photograph taken around 1906 Frank Clayton is second from the left. Frank married Maud Bilson in 1908 and blacksmithing sustained their family that expanded to six children: Mabel, Eva, John, Art, Frank, and Bill. All four of the boys had a turn in working for their father, until 1948, when Frank retired and his son Bill bought out the business. By then, the company had evolved into a machinery fabrication shop and Bill had a new steel-frame building constructed down the road.

This photograph was used on the Armstrong calendar in 1971 when the building was acquired by the city to become the Armstrong Spallumcheen Museum and Art Complex.

Do you have an old photograph that captures a moment, important or ordinary, in Canada's history? If you would like to submit it for possible publication, have it copied (please don't send priceless originals) and mail it to Album, c/o *The Beaver*, P.O. Box 56060, Portage Place RPO, Winnipeg, MB, R3B 0G9. Or email your submission to album@thebeaver.ca. Include a brief description of the photo, including its date and location. If possible, identify people in the photograph and provide further information about the event or situation illustrated. To have your posted submission returned, please include a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

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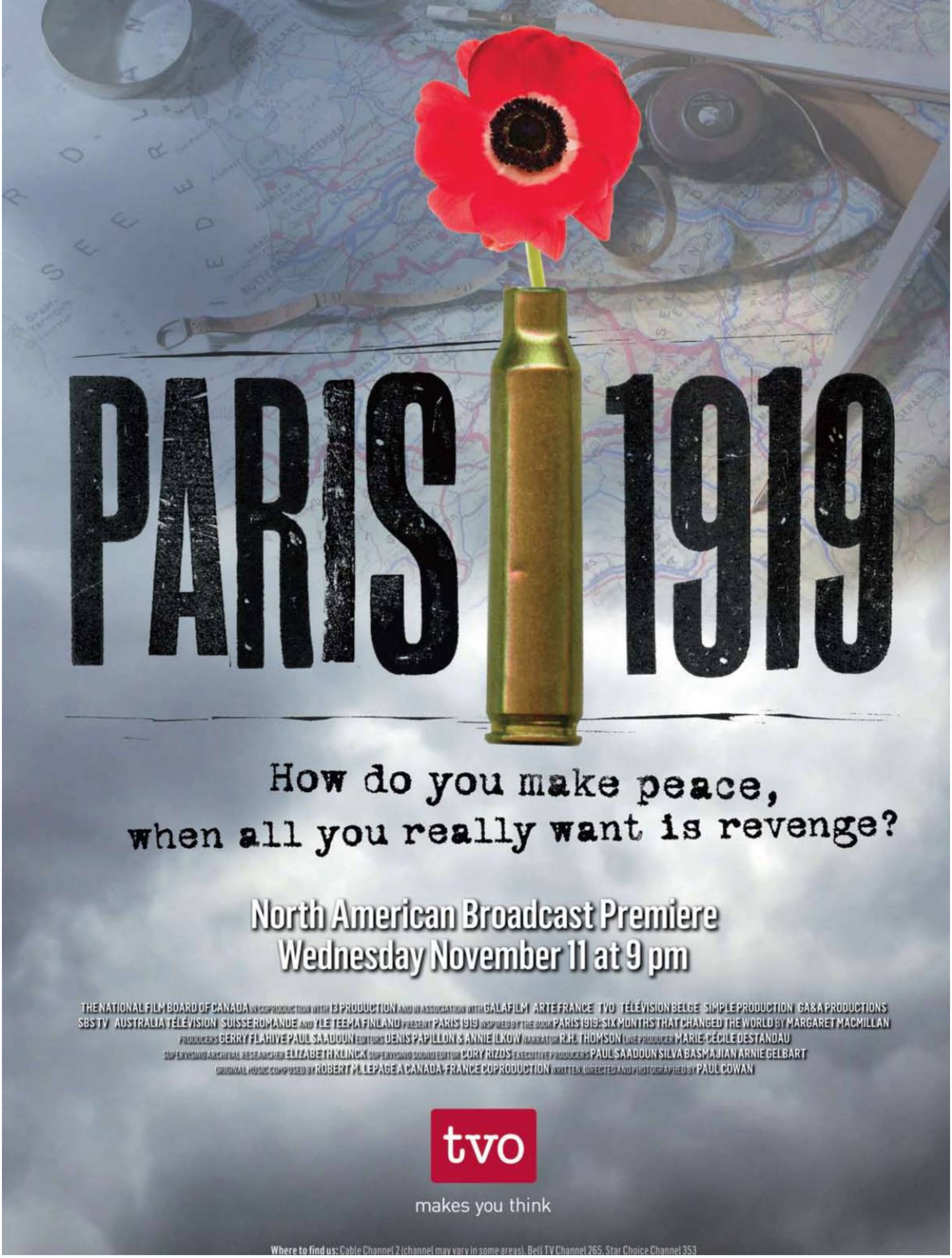

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